Epigraph

'I would only believe in a god who knew how to dance.

And when I saw my devil, there I found him earnest, thorough, deep, somber: it was the spirit of gravity—through him all things fall.

Not by wrath does one kill, but by laughing. Up, let us kill the spirit of gravity!

I learned to walk, since then I let myself run. I learned to fly, since then I do not wait to be pushed to move from the spot.

Now I am light, now I fly, now I see both myself beneath me, now a god dances through me' (Z 1, "On Reading and Writing," emphasis added).

University of Alberta

From Religious Neurosis to Religious Being: Nietzsche on Our Religious Instinct

by

Alan Buchanan McLuckie

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Philosophy

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall 2007

Library and Archives Canada

Published Heritage Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et Archives Canada

Direction du Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-33141-5
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-33141-5

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Abstract

Nietzsche is widely perceived as an atheist. This is hardly surprising given his infamous declarations that '*God is dead*' (*Z* Preface, 2; *GS* 108, 125) and the explicit and implicit attacks on religion (particularly Christianity) that are evident throughout most of his works. Yet, perhaps surprisingly, it is not to "refute" religion as such (or even Christianity in particular) that Nietzsche intends. Rather, because the death of God—the life and death of God being our own doing—is a "great event" by which we have deprived ourselves of the values and ideals that hitherto gave meaning to and structured our practical lives, Nietzsche contends that our religious instinct is now growing more 'vigorously' within us (*BGE* 53). My project will be to examine Nietzsche's *constructive* religious thought as it relates to this "religious instinct" he takes as constitutive of human existence.

For Eurydice

Anna Kessler

(1977-2005)

The starry heavens above me
The moral law within
So the world appears
So the world appears
This day so sweet
It will never come again
So the world appears
Through this mist of tears

(Nick Cave, There is a Kingdom)

Acknowledgments

μεγίστην χάριν ἔχων, I would like to thank all of my teachers—academic and otherwise—for their inspiration, encouragement, and support. In particular, I thank my supervisor, Professor Robert Burch, for his commitment to this somewhat unconventional project, his invaluable feedback on what now seems like countless drafts of this thesis, and for his patience with me throughout the creative process. I also thank Professor Amy Schmitter, whose professional and personal advice has been extremely helpful both for getting me through this project and for paving the road that awaits me. I thank Professor Leon Craig, whose seminal lectures on Nietzsche are perhaps single-handedly responsible for the inception of this project. I would like also to acknowledge Professor Anna Yeatman, who has a unique way of pulling the ground from beneath my feet when challenging my thinking. Special thanks go to Anita Theroux and Wendy Minns for their kindness and assistance over the last few years. I have heard it said that the department would fall apart were it not for them, and I cannot think of a better compliment one could receive. I wish to express my gratitude to my family and friends for their support. I know that I do not always show it (if ever I do), but I am eternally grateful for everything you have done for me. Lastly, I am indebted to Anna Kessler, to whom this work is dedicated, for teaching me how to commune with philosophy. Were it not for Anna, this project would have never seen the light of day.

List of Abbreviations

Nietzsche's works are cited using the following abbreviations: Roman numerals refer to major parts of the works and Arabic numerals refer to aphorism or section numbers, not pages. Exceptions are listed below.

A	*The Anti-Christ* (Hollingdale Translation)
ASZ	*Also Sprach Zarathustra* (Cited by book number, name of speech, and, where applicable, section number)
BGE	*Beyond Good and Evil* (Norman translation)
BGE 1972	*Beyond Good and Evil* (Hollingdale translation)
BGE 1992	*Beyond Good and Evil* (Kaufmann translation)
BT	*The Birth of Tragedy* (Kaufmann translation)
BT 1999	"The Dionysiac World View" (Unpublished essay, cited by page number; Speirs translation)
D	*Daybreak* (Hollingdale translation)
DFW	*Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*
EH	*Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* (Cited by section name and number; Kaufmann translation)
EH 2005	*Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* (Norman translation)
EH 1964	*Ecce Homo: Wie Man Wird, Was Man Ist*
GM	*On the Genealogy of Morality* (Diethe translation)
GS	*The Gay Science* (Nauckhoff and Del Caro translation)
HH	*Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (Hollingdale translation)
JGB	*Jenseits Von Gut Und Böse*
Letters	*Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Cited by page number)
LN	*Writings from the Late Notebooks* (Cited by page number)
TI	*Twilight of the Idols* (Cited by section name and number; Hollingdale translation)
UM	*Untimely Meditations* (Roman numerals refer to essay number and Arabic numerals refer to section number; Hollingdale translation)
WP	*The Will to Power* (Kaufmann and Hollingdale translation)
Z	*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Cited by book number, name of speech, and, where applicable, section number; Del Caro translation)

Leibniz' works are cited using the following abbreviations:

DM	*Discourse on Metaphysics*
NE	*The New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*

Schopenhauer's works are cited using the following abbreviations:

WR II	*The World as Will and Representation*, Volume II

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Introduction

> Dear Professor:
> Actually I would much rather be a Basel professor than God; but I have not ventured to carry my private egoism so far as to omit creating the world on his account (Nietzsche to Jakob Burckhard, Turin, January 5, 1889, *Letters* 346).
>
> It is not their love for humanity but rather the impotence of their love for humanity that keeps today's Christian from—burning us (*BGE* 104).
>
> NB. Religions perish through the belief in morality: the Christian-moral God is not tenable: hence 'atheism'—as if there could be no other kind of god (*LN* 79).

When treating Nietzsche's religious thought, the trend in the English language scholarship has been to focus on his condemnations of Christianity and Christian morality. Such emphasis has most often presented a portrait of Nietzsche as *anti*-religious.[1] A rudimentary analysis of any one of his texts will confirm that reading Nietzsche as *anti*-religious is not entirely without warrant. In *Ecce Homo*, for instance, Nietzsche says in no uncertain terms that 'religions are the affairs of the rabble; I find it necessary to wash my hands after I have come into contact with religious people' (*EH* "Destiny," 1). Nevertheless, *anti*-religious readings of Nietzsche fail to account for his *constructive* religious thought. As Nietzsche suggests in *Beyond Good and*

[1] In an unpublished paper, "Nietzsche on Redemption and Transfiguration" (to appear as the 12th chapter in the forthcoming *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational World.* Eds. Joshua Landy and Michael Saler. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), Lanier Anderson notes that Nietzsche's positive use of religious concepts has received more treatment in the German language secondary literature. Anderson cites, for examples, Jaspers (1961), Biser (1962), and Kaempfert (1971) (Anderson 39). It should be noted, however, that recent work in the English language literature has opened the space for dialogue on Nietzsche's constructive religious thought. See, in particular, Anderson (2007), Brian Reginster (2006), and Julian Young (2007).

Evil, what concerns him principally is resolving the religious tension that now exists within us. On Nietzsche's view, it is our "religious instinct" that leads us to seek for (and indeed to create) meaning and value for ourselves (our lives) and our world. In this regard, Nietzsche's famous claim that God is dead is in part a suggestion that the religious instinct of the modern world has become suspicious of and, in the case of the last men, who for Nietzsche represent the malaise of humanity in the modern world, even indifferent to the *other-worldly* ideals posited by traditional religious belief and religious life. Thus, the crisis of modernity, as Nietzsche sees it, is one of religious frustration insofar as our religious instinct is no longer satisfied by the traditional theistic responses that we have fostered for ourselves but it cannot simply disavow its demand for supplying meaning and value for our lives. Because the death of God—the life and death of God being our own doing—is a "great event" by which we have outgrown the values and ideals that hitherto gave meaning to and structured our practical lives, Nietzsche contends that our religious instinct out of its own dissatisfaction is now growing more 'vigorously' within us (*BGE* 53). Assuming Nietzsche's great concern for our religious well-being, it is my contention that his critique of religion and religious concepts not only ought *not* to be taken entirely at face value as a blanket dismissal of religion, but also that Nietzsche has a positive, constructive view of religion. My project will be to examine Nietzsche's *constructive* religious thought as it relates to this "religious instinct" he takes as constitutive of human existence.

Nietzsche himself alludes to the surfaces and masks in his writings, insisting that there are hidden depths and meaning. In the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, for

example, Nietzsche writes: 'It seems that all great things, in order to inscribe eternal demands in the heart of humanity, must first wander the earth under *monstrous and terrifying masks*' (*BGE* Preface, my emphasis). "All great things," as I read it, includes Nietzsche's own positive, constructive religious teaching. That Nietzsche prefaces the book in this way ought to suggest that "perhaps" not everything is as it seems—including, but not limited to, Nietzsche's attacks on religion and the religious. Speaking more directly to the point, § 289 of that same work, which I shall here quote at length, is devoted to a discussion of hidden depths and meaning in philosophical works:

> The hermit does not believe that a philosopher—given that a philosopher was always a hermit first—has ever expressed his actual and final opinions in books: don't people write books precisely to keep what they hide to themselves? In fact, he will doubt whether a philosopher could even *have* "final and actual" opinions, whether for a philosopher every cave does not have, *must* not have, an even deeper cave behind it—a more extensive, stranger, richer world above the surface, an abyss behind every ground, under every "groundwork." Every philosophy is a foreground philosophy—that is a hermit's judgment: "There is something arbitrary in *his* stopping here, looking back, looking around, in his not digging deeper *here*, and putting his spade away—there is also something suspicious about it." Every philosophy *conceals* a philosophy too: every opinion is also a hiding place, every word also a mask (*BGE* 289).

There is of course with Nietzsche an ironic paradox in his insisting literally, openly, that he has hidden depths and ought not to be read literally, when he is literal about not being read in such a way.[2] Furthermore, *Beyond Good and Evil* § 289 seems to lend credence to the post-modern Derridean reading of Nietzsche that speaks against the idea of the philosophical "whole" and the idea that a coherent "long logic" can be maintained. Nevertheless, concerning the reception of *Beyond Good and Evil*,

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[2] In an unpublished paper, "Images of the Cave," Robert Burch argues that the theoretical undecidability of masks and depths and grounds calls for the genuine philosopher to make a practical decision for life not on the basis of theoretical grounds but in terms of the *abgründlichen Gedanken* of eternal return, which is the philosopher's own invention.

Nietzsche insists: 'That they're dealing here the logic of a completely determinate philosophical sensibility and *not* with some mishmash of a hundred varied paradoxes and heterodoxies—of that, I believe, nothing has dawned on even my most favourable readers' (Nietzsche to Georg Brandes, January 8, 1888: quoted in Lampert 2001, 1-2).[3] Moreover, in Volume II of *Human, all too Human*, Nietzsche argues that 'the worst readers are those who behave like plundering troops: they take away a few things they can use, dirty and confound the remainder, and revile the *whole*' (*HH* II, 137, my emphasis). While this is not the place for a long and detailed discussion of how to *correctly* interpret Nietzsche, as a hermeneutic precept I will take Nietzsche at his word and look for this "logic of a completely determinate philosophical sensibility." Thus, for the sake of clarity, I will provide a few preliminary directives regarding the approach I take to reading Nietzsche in this thesis.

Das religiöse Wesen

While maintaining a view to the whole Nietzschean corpus, the principal focus for my discussion of Nietzsche's constructive religious thought is Part III of *Beyond Good and Evil*: *Das religiöse Wesen*. *Beyond Good and Evil* is a 'critique of modernity' (*EH* "Books," *BGE* 2). The fundamental fact of modernity, on Nietzsche's view, is the death of God, and Part III of *Beyond Good and Evil* in particular is pivotal for understanding Nietzsche's view of the religious instinct and its possibilities within this context. The German word *Wesen*, as Kaufmann points out in a footnote to his translation to *Beyond Good and Evil*, is most often rendered as "essence" in

[3] While Nietzsche's remarks here concern *Beyond Good and Evil* specifically, one could just as easily apply his comments to any one of his books.

philosophical prose, but "being" is also often called for in many contexts (Kaufmann 1992, 247). Kaufmann also notes that in certain contexts "character," "conduct," "manners," "airs," and even "ado" is called for. Kaufmann himself translates *Das religiöse Wesen* as "What is Religious" (Kaufmann 1992, 247), which seems to intimate a certain "whatness" about religion in the sense of a determinate essence that can be pinned down in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions that hold as an abstract universal for all places and times. Judith Norman (2002), whose translation of *Beyond Good and Evil* I primarily refer to throughout this thesis, translates *Das religiöse Wesen* as "The Religious Character," and R. J. Hollingdale (1972) opts for "The Religious Nature." However, because it brings out the existential sense of *Das religiöse Wesen* and yet avoids the value implications of the talk of "character," the translation I favour in this thesis is "religious *being*."

In his sketch, "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*," Leo Strauss notes that Part III of *Beyond Good and Evil* is not titled '*Das Wesen der Religion*, one of the reasons for this being that the essence of religion, that which is common to all religions, is not or should not be of any concern to us' (Strauss 192). On Nietzsche's view, *das Wesen der Religion*—"the *essence* of religion"—is not and should not be of any concern to us precisely because there is no specific "essence" to religion in the sense that an exhaustive account of a universal set of determinate principles that constitute *what* religion is *as such*, and in this way serve to pre-determine the dogmas that constitute the "true" and final religion as a fixed set of beliefs. Nevertheless, the expression of the religious instinct, as Nietzsche sees it, is in an important way coterminous with human being and society. Within the context of

Nietzsche's thinking, talk of *das religiöse Wesen* suggests that the religious instinct is constitutive of human existence, which amounts then to an ontological claim. Two things are important to stress here. First, in making the claim that the religious instinct is constitutive of human existence Nietzsche is not making an essentialist metaphysical claim about how things always and everywhere necessarily are in terms of insight into a fixed human nature. Rather, Nietzsche is making an ontological/historical claim about how things effectively "have been" in our history (where *Wesen* then is a matter of what *sind gewesen*). Second, the religious instinct just is the need to create meaning and value for our lives, and the fulfillment of this need is what "binds us back" (*re-ligamur*) not to just this or that value or end but to our very way of *being in the world.* Nietzsche's talk of "religious being," as I understand it, refers specifically to the various manifestations of the religious instinct throughout history. At the same time, and more important for the purposes of this thesis, Nietzsche's discussion of "religious being" opens the space for dialogue about the 'still unexhausted possibilities' (*BGE* 45) for the religious instinct to express itself. That is, Nietzsche envisions a new horizon of meaning for expressing our religious instinct. Thus, there is a sense in which Nietzsche's talk of religious "being" in the wake of the death of God opens the way for a *new* religious being in response to the current need of our religious instinct, a religious being that is distinguished and thus in a sense is a realisation of "character" in the form of the *Übermensch* who wills eternal return.

Four Functions of an Authentic Religion:

Because in this thesis I am principally concerned with Nietzsche's conception of an "authentic" religious being, it is crucial to preface my discussion with a tentative outline of what, in Nietzsche's view, are the essential functions that an authentic religion ought to carry out in order to fulfill the religious instinct's need to create meaning and value for our lives. In the second volume of his *The World as Will and Representation*, Arthur Schopenhauer outlines four functions that he thinks authentic religions ought to fulfill. Julian Young follows this characterization of an authentic religion in his book *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Religion*, arguing, I think correctly, that the four functions of an authentic religion outlined by Schopenhauer are also central to Nietzsche's own religious project (Young 8-13). I want to stress, however, that I do not think that these are the "only" four functions an authentic religion, on Nietzsche's view and otherwise, ought to fulfill. Moreover, I do not intend to simply reprise either Schopenhauer's or Young's views. Rather, I will use Schopenhauer and Young's reading of these four functions of an authentic religion as something like a structural heuristic that will be developed more fully in the course of the whole thesis. Thus, I shall simply outline these four functions for the time being, and will treat them in more detail as they arise throughout this thesis.

The first and most essential function any religion ought to fulfill is to deal with death, or more particularly the fact of human mortality (Young 11). As Schopenhauer points out, 'finding a "consolation" for, and "antidote" to, the certainty of death is also the principal task of philosophy. As Socrates remarks in the *Phaedo*, at bottom, authentic philosophy is a "preparation for death" (*WR* II p. 463)' (quoted by Young

11). Secondly, authentic religion must provide a remedy and recompense for suffering and pain. In other words, authentic religion must offer some sort of 'redemption' for life's 'nausea' and 'despair,' and, in some sense, must 'reconcile us to at least the *grand* narrative of our existence by reducing the painful part to but a brief chapter' (Young 11-2). Thirdly, authentic religion 'is required to fulfill concerns society as a whole rather than the existential predicament of the individual' (Young 12). That is, an authentic religion ought to be concerned with social cohesion, creating a community bound by values and ideals that give meaning to and structure the practical lives of said community. This aspect of authentic religion jars most with conventional readings of Nietzsche as a radical moral individualist. I shall have more to say about this conflict presently. The fourth feature that Schopenhauer suggests is essential to any authentic religion is mystery. As Young points out, 'part of the reason for the allegorical nature of religious language—as opposed to the literalness aimed at by philosophy—is … that the latter would be beyond the comprehension of the uneducated masses' (Young 12). A sense of mystery is thus essential to provide religion with authority before the masses, and 'mystery creates authority by utilizing our awe before the unknown' (Young 12).

In Nietzsche's view the traditional religious response to these four needs of our religious instinct has involved some sense of the *other-worldly*. However, for Nietzsche, the death of God requires the creation of new, more, or at least differently meaningful religious responses to fulfill these needs Nietzsche sees as coterminous with human being and society. Although I shall allude to these fours function

throughout this thesis, it is in the discussion of eternal return in Chapter Four that I show how they play a central role in Nietzsche's religious thought.

Challenging Convention:

Because my reading of Nietzsche is somewhat unconventional (at least in light of Anglophone scholarship), I should like to say a few words about these conventions and why my reading breaks with them. On the one hand, Nietzsche is often interpreted as an "individualist." As Young points out, there are two senses in which the individualist reading has traditionally been ascribed to Nietzsche. The first sense in which Nietzsche is taken to be an individualist is evidenced in Kaufmann's highly influential *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*: 'The leitmotif of Nietzsche's life and thought [was] the theme of the antipolitical individual who seeks self-perfection far from the modern world' (Kaufmann 1974, 418; cf. Young 2-3). Along the same lines, Young also makes reference to Nehamas' *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, noting: 'Concerned, as Nehamas is, to present Nietzsche's literary construction of himself as an exemplary model of self-creation (and hence of "health"), it is revealing to note that such collectivist notions as "politics", "culture" and even "society" achieve not a single entry in his index' (Young 3). On such readings, then, Nietzsche's *sole* concern is the well-being of the single, individual philosopher—perhaps himself alone. However, what these readings fail to and perhaps

cannot account for is Nietzsche's concern for culture,[4] which is, as Young points out, 'an unmistakable feature of [his] texts' (Young 3).

The second sense in which Nietzsche is read as an individualist, while at least accounting for his concern for culture, holds that cultural greatness, for Nietzsche, consists, not in the greatness of the culture as a whole, but rather in the existence and greatness of the few—the higher types, such as a Zarathustra, a 'Beethoven or Goethe' (Young 3), say. On this reading, the role of culture is to breed and nurture these few elite individuals for the sake of these individuals themselves. This second sense in which Nietzsche is considered to be an individualist certainly does seem more plausible, especially when we consider his talk of an order of rank and his suggestion that aristocracy's 'fundamental belief must always be that society *cannot* exist for the sake of society, but only as the substructure and framework for raising an exceptional type of being up to its higher duty and to a higher state of *being*' (*BGE* 258). Nietzsche most certainly views himself as one of these elite, noble individuals. He is an aristocratic patriarch who does not pull punches when it comes to speaking of the rabble. Read carefully, however, Nietzsche does not so much treat the "rabble" itself with distain as he does the *values* that the rabble upholds. More specifically, Nietzsche distains values such as the belief in the transcendent God of Christianity, for example, values that were created to give comfort to the rabble, but values that reveal in themselves a profound hostility toward life. For Nietzsche, the valuing of the higher types of individuals is not that these individuals are valued for their own sake at the expense of the community. Rather, as I hope to make clearer below, 'the higher types

[4] In the first essay of his *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche defines "culture" as 'above all, unity of artistic style in all the expressions of the life of a *people*' (*UM* I, 1, my emphasis). In this sense, then, culture is to be understood as a broad category inclusive of religion and politics.

are valued for the sake of the social totality' (Young 3). Nietzsche's philosophers of the future, like every choice individual, will instinctively strive 'for a citadel and secrecy where he is rescued from the crowds, the many, the vast majority; where, as the exception, he can forget the human norm' (*BGE* 26). But, like Plato's philosopher kings who must return to the cave, these Nietzschean philosophers must descend from their mountain heights, responsible for the development, enhancement, and communal health of the species humanity. As we shall see below, it is religion that Nietzsche thinks is the primary tool for accomplishing this end.

Yet as I alluded to at the outset, there is an abundance of literature that endorses a negative reading of Nietzsche as simply *anti*-religious, and this reading does have some textual support. For instance, there are three passages in *Ecce Homo*, which I shall turn to presently, that do, at least at first glance, seem to suggest this interpretation. It is not my intention to deal directly with the secondary literature that advances the negative *anti*-religious reading. Instead, I shall make my case by presenting Nietzsche's positive understanding of religion, taking account of both the abundance of passages throughout Nietzsche's corpus where he expresses great concern for our religious well-being, as well as those passages that express to the contrary a seemingly blatant *anti*-religious sentiment. In doing so, I am concerned in particular with the "logic" of Nietzsche's own positive view of religion as it is presented in *Beyond Good and Evil*, but with a view to the whole Nietzschean corpus. In order to anticipate and deflect the negative *anti*-religious reading of Nietzsche, however, I shall consider the three *Ecce Homo* passages noted above, where Nietzsche suggests that he himself is *not* offering a religious teaching.

In the first of these passages, Nietzsche says: '"God," "immortality of the soul," "redemption," "beyond"—*without exception*, concepts to which I never devoted any attention, or time; not even as a child. Perhaps I have never been childlike enough for them?' (*EH* "Clever," 1, my emphasis). This claim notwithstanding, we shall see that these themes *are* in fact *the* dominant themes throughout much of Nietzsche's published corpus. What is true, however, is that Nietzsche rarely addresses these issues speaking, for examples, as a theologian (*EH* "Books," *BGE* 2) or as a dogmatist (*BGE* 43). That is, Nietzsche never concerns himself with "proving" the existence (or *non*-existence) of God or the immortality of the soul. Moreover, Nietzsche never concerns himself with redemption in the sense of offering a philosophical proof for their being an after-life in which we are all somehow redeemed for our sins.[5] Rather, as I will argue, Nietzsche *transforms* these questions, thus giving them an entirely new meaning: Nietzsche's responses to these questions are to be understood in the sense that they affirm meaning and value for this world and this life here and now, rather than in terms of some *other-worldly* ideal. Dionysus, we shall see, becomes the symbol for the unrestrained affirmation of existence in all of its beauty and utter brutality. Eternal return, as the 'highest affirmation that is at all possible' (*EH* "Books," *Z* 1), does speak to the immortality of the soul, but not in the sense that immortality has traditionally been conceived. Eternal return is also a form of redemption from suffering in the sense that 'the discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering … has been the sole cause of every *enhancement* in humanity so far' (*BGE*

[5] Cf. *Daybreak* 79: 'Is your love of your neighbor an act of clemency, then? Your pity an act of clemency? Well, if you are capable of this, go a step further: love yourselves as an act of clemency—then you will no longer have any need of your god, and the whole drama of Fall and Redemption will be played out to the end in you yourselves' (*D* 79).

225, my emphasis). The great discipline of suffering is the discipline of turning suffering into art, into representations with which it is possible to live, rather than negating suffering by attempting to cast all the nasty parts of life into oblivion by telling ourselves a story about some *other-worldly* redemption, for instance. But even if we miss Nietzsche's intended innovations in addressing the topics of God, immortality, and redemption, that he follows up this claim be telling us that he does not '***by any means know atheism as a result***' (*EH* "Clever," 1, my emphasis) should be at least a clue that he is ***not*** entirely *anti*-religious.

The second and third passages are, in effect, book ends for *Ecce Homo*. In the Preface to *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes: 'The last thing *I* should promise would be to "improve" mankind. No new idols are erected by me' (*EH* Preface, 2). And in the opening passage of *Ecce Homo*'s final section, partially quoted above, we hear Nietzsche suggesting that 'there is nothing in me of a founder of a religion—religions are the affairs of the rabble; I find it necessary to wash my hands after I have come into contact with religious people.—I *want* no "believers"; I think I am too malicious to believe in myself; I never speak to the masses' (*EH* "Destiny," 1). We shall see in Chapter Three that the No-saying, No-doing part of Nietzsche's project is *the* central task *Beyond Good and Evil* purports to execute. But, more importantly, the book is a fish-hook meant to cultivate the noble Yes-saying type. Nietzsche cautions, however, that 'if nothing was caught, I am not to blame. *There were no fish*' (*EH* "Books," *BGE* 1). In this sense, Nietzsche is more of a John the Baptist, a herald of the coming religion, than he his himself a founder of a new religion.[6] That perhaps there are no

[6] Nietzsche and his fellow 'free spirits' are the '*heralds and precursors*' of a new religious being (BGE 44, my emphasis).

fish always remains a possibility for Nietzsche, and there is thus no *promise* of "improving humankind." Nevertheless, as Young, to my mind correctly, points out: 'But of course, that Nietzsche does not see *himself* as the founder of a religion by no means shows that he does not want, one day, a new one to be founded' (Young 192). Furthermore, Nietzsche has Zarathustra tell us that 'whoever fishes where there are no fish—him I cannot even call superficial' (*Z* III, "On Apostates," 2), which might suggest to us that he—the distinction between Nietzsche and Zarathustra here being irrelevant—believes he will make his catch. The founding of a new religion is the task of the philosophers of the future—it is *our* task. Nietzsche's task, '*wakefulness itself*' (*BGE* Preface), is intended to awaken us from our dogmatic slumber and to call us to action to take accountability for ourselves and to bear the responsibility of the definitive task of humankind: to create meaning and value for ourselves in this world here and now. In so doing, Nietzsche prescribes a task for the future philosophers: *first and foremost* their task is the creation of a healthy community through religious means.

Its suspicions of (and indifference to) the traditional theistic responses notwithstanding, Nietzsche believes that the religious instinct itself is central to our continual search for meaning and value for *this* life. It is through an understanding of the human religious instinct and religious being that the philosophers of the future—the future creators of truth and values as Nietzsche envisions them—can make use of religion for the education and cultivation of higher, more worthy human beings. This thesis will attempt to show that in spite of Nietzsche's rejection of certain aspects of religion, he nevertheless wants to supply us with a *positive* role for religion in the

ennobling of humankind. I want to stress that to misinterpret Nietzsche with respect to religion and humanity is not only to miss that the heart of his theory speaks to the profound human quest for meaning, but also to overlook, misunderstand, confuse, and obscure the several positive remedies that Nietzsche has to offer us.

Reading Nietzsche's Texts:

Before I begin it is necessary to say a few words about my textual approach to reading Nietzsche. Some commentators (e.g., Lampert 1996) argue that both Nietzsche's published works and the *Nachlaß* should be taken together as constituting Nietzsche's considered view—Lampert, for instance, also often appeals to Nietzsche's correspondence. Others insist that the views expressed in Nietzsche's published work have authority over the *Nachlaß*; yet others have favoured the picture presented in the posthumously published *The Will to Power*. Of course, these distinctions are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. In the absence of my own fully worked-out view about interpretation, I will proceed as a common sense assumption that when there are issues in dispute, Nietzsche's published works will be given authority over the rest of his writing. Moreover, while it is true that certain aspects of his thinking evolved throughout his career, I agree fully with Young that Nietzsche is '*above all* a religious thinker' (Young 201) and that his treatment of what constitutes a healthy religious community remains fairly consistent throughout his corpus (cf. Young 1-13). Thus, while my project will center primarily on Nietzsche's treatment of religious being as presented in *Beyond Good and Evil*, I will be proceeding as if Nietzsche's thought on religion does remain consistent throughout his corpus and shall make use of these texts

where I think they are particularly helpful and insightful for illuminating my discussion.

Chapter One

God is Dead!

> *New Battles*.—After Buddha was dead, they still showed his shadow in a cave for centuries – a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way people are, there may still for millennia be caves in which they show his shadow.—And we—we must still defeat his shadow as well! (*GS* 108).
>
> But when Zarathustra was alone he spoke thus to his heart: "Could it be possible! This old saint in his woods has not yet heard the news that *God is dead*!" (*Z* Preface, 2).
>
> *Historical refutation as the definitive refutation*.—In former times, one sought to prove that there is no God—today one indicates how the belief that there is a God could *arise* and how this belief acquired its weight and importance: a counter-proof that there is no God thereby becomes superfluous.—When in former times one had refuted the "proofs of the existence of God" put forward, there always remained the doubt whether better proofs might not be adduced than those just refuted: in those days atheists did not know how to make a clean sweep (*D* 95).

In this chapter I explicate the role and meaning of the death of God in Nietzsche's thought. Although much of my discussion draws from *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I begin my treatment with an explication of aphorism 125 of *The Gay Science*, which is perhaps the most famous of Nietzsche's proclamations of the death of God. I proceed in this way for two reasons. First and foremost, within the context of Nietzsche's published corpus, *The Gay Science* directly sets the scene for *Zarathustra*, and so, I think, for Nietzsche's thinking about the significance of the death of God for the modern world in general.[7] Second, although I will rely principally on *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to develop the theme of the death of God, *The Gay Science* § 125 serves to highlight

[7] The final aphorism (342) of Book Four of *The Gay Science*, originally the final aphorism of *The Gay Science* itself (Nietzsche added Book Five in 1887, after the publication of both *Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*), is, with a few minor variations, effectively the opening passage of the prologue to *Zarathustra*.

four key, interrelated aspects. Specifically, these aspects concern what, for Nietzsche, the idea of God as living plays, the essential historicity of the issue of religion, what as the essential mark of modernity the death of God means, and, finally, how Nietzsche sees the death of God as the call for a new way of thinking about "truth."

Nietzsche begins aphorism 125 of *The Gay Science*, almost comically, by asking his readers:

> Haven't you heard of that madman who in the bright morning lit a lantern and ran around the marketplace crying incessantly, 'I'm looking for God! I'm looking for God!' Since many of those who did not believe in God were standing around together just then, he caused great laughter. Has he been lost, then? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone to sea? Emigrated?—Thus they shouted and laughed, one interrupting the other. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. 'Where is God?' he cried; 'I'll tell you! *We have killed him*—you and I! We are all his murderers (*GS* 125).

There is a touch of irony in this passage. Namely, we might read Nietzsche's account of the madman as autobiographical insofar as the madman provides us with an apt caricature of the reception of Nietzsche's own proclamation of the death of God. That is, Nietzsche's well-documented mental illness has led some commentators to dismiss his writings (most often his later writings produced nearer to the time of his mental collapse in 1890) as the incoherent and somewhat insane ramblings of madman. However, Nietzsche's madman is a '*tolle Mensch*' (*DFW* 125) rather than a *Wahnsinniger* or a *Verrückter* or *Irrer*. That is, the madman is someone who is deeply disturbed about what he sees and, although he appears to those in the marketplace as crazy and frantic, he is not someone who is actually insane.[8] But there is nevertheless something problematic about the madman's charge that God is dead. Namely, how it is that God, an infinite, all-perfect being, could somehow have been killed—and by

[8] Thanks to Robert Burch for helping to clarify the distinctions in the German here.

our hand no less! This might lead one to suspect that the madman is somewhat crazy after all. The madman himself, however, appreciates this worry: 'But how did we do this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? ... Is the magnitude of this deed not too great for us? Do we not ourselves have to become gods merely to appear worthy of it?' (*GS* 125). The very definition of God as omnipotent precludes the possibility of His being murdered, let alone by finite creatures such as ourselves. In light of the logical absurdity of the madman's cries, the reaction of those in the marketplace to him as little more than a clown appear warranted. Nevertheless, there is something radically different at issue here than simply a matter of logically possibility or impossibility.

Recall from above that I suggested Nietzsche begins *The Gay Science* § 125 "almost comically." For Nietzsche, however, there is nothing at all comical about the death of God. As will be made clearer below, Nietzsche's view is that God lives not *per se* but only in and through the great thoughts and events by which He is created and the "living out" of that creation. Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God is intended to signify that God is no longer part of our reality as we *actually* live it out. But because it leaves the world in a state of disorientation, the death of God is having *devastating* consequences for us:

> God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How can we console ourselves, the murderers of all murderers! ... Where are we moving to? Away from all suns? Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sideward, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down? Aren't we straying as though through an infinite nothing? Isn't empty space breathing at us? Hasn't it got colder? Isn't night and more night coming again and again? (*GS* 125).

Although Nietzsche is critical, for example, of the Christian moral framework, it was the God of Christianity as living that provided us with the values and ideals that gave meaning to and structured our practical lives. Moreover, it was the living God that offered "the people" (or at least the people "faithful" to this particular religion) a consolation for and antidote to the certainty of death through the promise of eternal life. Furthermore, it was this living God that redeemed our pain and suffering, offering us salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, His son. But God is dead and so too, then, is the "sun" that gave meaning to and structured our lives. What this means for Nietzsche is that we are now left to our own devices to provide new consolations and redemption for ourselves:

> The holiest and the mightiest thing the world has ever possessed has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood from us? With what water could we clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what holy games will we have to invent for ourselves? ... There was never a greater deed—and whoever is born after us will on account of this deed belong to a higher history than all history up to now!' (*GS* 125).

I will have more to say about Nietzsche's understanding of the consolation and redemption offered by the traditional theistic conception of God in Chapter Two, and will treat Nietzsche's transformations of these concepts in Chapter Four below. For the time being, however, I must first examine how Nietzsche understands the historicity of the death of God.

Nietzsche does not so much argue that God is dead as much as he simply states it as a matter of fact. The absence of any *logical* argumentation for Nietzsche's claim that God is dead is at first blush quite striking for the work of a philosopher. *The Gay Science*, on the one hand, simply announces the death of God as a sort of gossipy anecdote: "Haven't you heard..." *Zarathustra*, on the other hand, offers only the following syllogism for the claim that God is dead: '*if* there were gods, how could I

stand not to be a god! *Therefore* there are no gods' (*Z* II, "On the Blessed Isles"). Although valid (assuming the missing premise "I am not a god" is supplied), the argument itself is hardly convincing; nor, for that matter, is it meant to be. This is not to say that Nietzsche offers no argumentative support at all concerning the death of God, however. Nonetheless, the demonstrable absence of logical argumentation in Nietzsche's treatment of the death of God should be considered in light of traditional philosophical arguments which are often read as if they were meant to establish the existence of God.

For Anselm, on the one hand, the ontological argument is nothing more than faith seeking understanding.[9] That is, belief in God *is* Anselm's reality and the argument serves no other purpose than to make sense of his experience as it is lived out. That God exists is *never* in question from the Anselmian point of view: faith is the precondition which drives the pursuit of intellectual understanding.[10] Descartes, on the other hand, makes use of the ontological argument, at least overtly, for the purpose of *persuading* unbelievers. The expectation, it would seem, is that those whose reality is not effectively informed by belief in God will be convinced of God's existence, and thereby come to believe in God, by the argument (CSM II 3).[11] Arguably, however, when we offer arguments to establish the existence of God, as Descartes claims is his intent, God is already effectively *dead*. Put differently, a valid argument for the

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[9] A note in S. N. Deane's translation of Anselm's *Proslogium*, for instance, points out that Anselm's original title for the work was *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*: 'Faith Seeking Understanding' (Anselm 47).
[10] As Richard Taylor puts this point, Anselm was not trying to discover whether or not God exists, but simply trying to understand, by means of reason, that which *he already firmly believed* (Taylor viii).
[11] Although Descartes is speaking to (meditating with) himself in the *Meditations*, he makes it clear in the "Dedicatory letter to the Sorbonne" that his intent is to convince the unbelievers: 'but in the case of unbelievers, it seems that there is no religion, and practically no moral virtue, that they can be persuaded to adopt until these two truths [the existence of God and the immortality of the soul] are proved to them by natural reason' (CSM II 3).

existence of God gives us nothing more than a *statement* about the existence of God and does not make God a part of our effective reality as it is "lived out."

Both Leibniz' and Gödel's treatment of the Ontological argument provide some helpful insights for this last point. Like Anselm, God's existence is never in question from the Leibnizian point of view. Leibniz begins his philosophical inquiry from the accepted notion of God and proceeds to provide an account of what God's existence necessarily entails: 'The most widely accepted and meaningful notion we have of God is expressed well enough in these words, that God is an absolutely perfect being; yet the consequences of these words are not sufficiently considered' (*DM* 1). For Leibniz, the Ontological argument is valid insofar as the necessary existence of God follows logically from the essence of God as traditionally defined.[12] However, Leibniz thought that the Ontological argument was problematic insofar as it failed to take into consideration whether or not God, as traditionally conceived, was even possible. Leibniz' important contribution to the Ontological argument is a sort of modal proof for the existence of God that purports to show that not only is God—'a being of supreme grandeur and perfection, including all degrees thereof' (*NE* 503)—possible, but that God is also the universal and necessary condition for *any* possibility whatever. While Leibniz thus took himself to be completing the Ontological argument, one might challenge Leibniz on his notion of perfection. Gödel's treatment of the Ontological argument does just this. Nonetheless, although Gödel adopted a different notion of perfection than Leibniz, his own modal proof not only follows more or less the same reasoning as Leibniz', but it also arrives at the same conclusion regarding

[12] In his treatment of the Ontological argument Leibniz references the versions presented by both Descartes and Spinoza specifically.

God's necessary existence as the universal and necessary condition for any possibility whatever. Interestingly enough, however, Robert Merrihew Adams notes that 'though [Gödel] was "satisfied" with the proof, he hesitated to publish it, *for fear that it would be thought "that he actually believes in God*, whereas he is only engaged in a logical investigation (that is, in showing that such a proof with classical assumptions [completeness, etc.], correspondingly axiomatized, is possible).'" (quoted by Feferman 388, my emphasis). What is important to note for our purposes here is that all the Ontological argument gives us is a *statement* about the accepted *definition* of God and not *God*. In other words, the argument could only be meaningful if God informed the way we lived out our lives *as a result of* the argument. Moreover, if an argument is needed to establish the existence of God, then what is effectively real is nothing more than what can be rationally proven. In this circumstance, reason then becomes absolute as our highest affirmation of value, not God.[13] Similarly, any argument given to disprove the existence of God is subject to the same criticisms.

For Nietzsche, truth and value are only effective for us insofar as they inform our existence in the world, and they inform our existence in the world because we creatively "will them" and "live them out." On Nietzsche's view, what is distinctive about our time is that God is no longer part of our reality as we *actually* live it out and as such the claim that God is dead needs no logical argumentative support. That God is dead, for Nietzsche, is an affirmation that the past "truth" and "value" willed as "given" under the aegis of a transcendent "God" is no longer the effective ruling conception of our modern reality, however much lip-service is still paid to it. Simply,

[13] We might think of Kierkegaard's concern in *Fear and Trembling* about the Divine being reduced to the ethical because the ethical is considered the absolute as revealed by reason. If the ethical is the universal, and as the universal is the absolute, then the Divine can be nothing more than the universal.

that God is dead *is* the historical reality—understood both in the sense of a temporal moment in history and as a defining historical epoch—within which Nietzsche is situated, and the death of God itself is thus not something that needs "proving" in the sense of an *apodexis*—a chain of reasoning leading to a true conclusion. What Nietzsche does provide us with is something of an *epidexis*—showing forth the death of God through a description/diagnosis of modernity. In this sense, we might thus reckon Nietzsche as somewhat of a cultural physician.

Nietzsche recounts several of his own *observations* of the modern world to provide insight into the (religious) historical context within which he is working. In *Beyond Good and Evil* § 53, for instance, Nietzsche asks the question: 'Why atheism today?' Nietzsche does not raise this question because he himself is trying to persuade people that they should be atheists. Rather, as is suggested by his own response to the question, atheism *already is* the effective reality of his contemporaries. Nietzsche's question, then, is an attempt to understand *why* this is so:

> God "the father" has been thoroughly refuted; and so has "the Judge" and "the Reward-giver." The same for God's "free will": he doesn't listen,—and even if he did, he wouldn't know how to help anyway. The worst part of it is: he seems unable to communicate in an intelligible manner: is he unclear?[14]—*After hearing, questioning, discussing many things*, these are the causes I have found for the decline of European theism (*BGE* 53, my emphaisis).

The suggestion here, as I have been arguing, is clear: Nietzsche himself has not set out to prove to the world that God does not exist. Rather, it is in and through *dialogue with* and *observation of* his contemporaries that Nietzsche discovered that God is already effectively dead in their hearts and minds: 'modern people can no longer relate to the hideous superlative found by an ancient taste in the paradoxical formula "god on

[14] *Beyond Good and Evil* § 121 expands on this point: 'It is subtle that God learned Greek when he wanted to become a writer—and that he did not learn it better' (*BGE* 121). Nietzsche is referring, of course, to the fact of the New Testament's being written in Greek.

the cross"' (*BGE* 46). As we shall see more fully below, however, Nietzsche is not suggesting that there is no one in the world who can relate to the theistic conception of God. On Nietzsche's view, there are still believers but they are presented as existing outside the modern community. For the moment, however, I want to focus on two senses in which the religious attitude of modernity reveals to Nietzsche that God is dead and how the death of God occasions the need for a new way of thinking about truth.

First, recall that many of the people the madman sees in the marketplace do not believe in God. As such their effective reality is itself not informed by belief in a transcendent God. Rather, on Nietzsche view, religious being in the modern world—a sort of motley marketplace—is the nihilistic religion of the last man with religion being subsumed into the carnival of entertainments and *divertissements*: 'We are the first age to be educated *in puncto* of "costumes," I mean of morals, articles of faith, artistic tastes, and religions, and prepared as no age has ever been for a carnival in the grand style, for the most spiritually carnivalesque laughter of high spirits, for the transcendental heights of the highest inanity and Aristophanean world mockery' (*BGE* 223). 'The last man,' Strauss notes, is 'the lowest and most decayed man, the herd man without any ideals and aspirations, but well fed, well clothed, well housed, well medicated by ordinary physicians and by psychiatrists' (quoted by Lampert 1986, 25). Simply, over-medicated and out of touch with the world at large, the last man is one whose aspirations are limited to a self-satisfying, self-preservation and thus who does not concern himself with anything that might compromise this illusion. However, the last man 'blinks' (*Z* Prologue, 5) at his invention of happiness as he does not

effectively believe the story he tells himself. The danger of the last man is the embracing of nihilism insofar as what is embraced as truth is not what is effectively believed and lived out, but merely what satisfies as a sort of functional pragmatism that does not genuinely engage us. In other words, the religion of the last man is nihilistic in the sense that the last man places value in an evaluation that he himself does not effectively believe—lying to himself out of sickness, incapacity, and despair. As such, the last man *truly* values nothing.[15]

It is thus the religious attitude displayed in their actions that leads Nietzsche to conclude that God is dead in the *hearts* of his contemporaries. Rather, the effective reality of his contemporaries actually cultivates *un*-belief. As Nietzsche puts this point in *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, 'it is the modern, noisy, time-consuming, self-satisfied, stupidly proud industriousness which, more than anything else, gives people an education and preparation in "un-belief"' (*BGE* 58). Too busy with 'their businesses or their pleasures, not to mention the "fatherland" and the newspapers and "familial obligations"' many people only register the presence of religion 'in the world with a type of *dull amazement*' (*BGE* 58, my emphasis). As Nietzsche sees it, it is the everyday, mundane tasks of the industrious, modern world that takes precedence in the hearts of his contemporaries, and not religion.[16] This, again, by no means implies that

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[15] If we are troubled by Nietzsche's description of the last man, as we indeed should be, we might pause to ask ourselves why. In other words, is it that we detect a tone of arrogance in Nietzsche who thinks himself better than the rest of humanity or is it that we are troubled by something within ourselves that matches this description and so are unable to endure what we see in the mirror Nietzsche holds before us? 'Which of us is Oedipus? Which one the Sphinx?' (*BGE* 1).

[16] As an aside, and taking his comments only slightly out of context, Julian Young talks on a 'more debased level' of the gods and goddesses of contemporary society. The gods and goddesses of the modern world that inspire awe and reverence, he suggests, are comparable to 'the space-invaders fame and the "woman's" magazine. In the latter, terrible things—drunkenness, disease, divorce, and death—happen to its gods and goddesses (minor royals, rock musicians and football stars), but through it all the glamour remains, their stardom shines on' (Young 19). If we take Nietzsche seriously that what is

all people in the modern world are hostile to religion or that there is no one at all who is genuinely religious. Concerning the former, Nietzsche's claim is that 'if circumstance (or the state) requires them to take part in [religious] customs, they do what is required, like people tend to do—, and they do it with a patient unassuming earnestness, without much in the way of curiosity or unease: they just live too far apart and outside to even think they need a For or Against in such matters' (*BGE* 58). In other words, the religious attitude of many people in the contemporary world, on Nietzsche view, is one of profound detachment: although people go through the motions of what is required of them, they do not have any sense of *why* it is that they are doing what religion asks of them. More importantly, modern people, Nietzsche thinks, do not question what it is their religion demands of them, even when given sufficient reason to do so.

Zarathustra's prologue bears out this last point nicely: Having arrived with the deceased tightrope-walker at the house of a hermit on the edge of the forest, Zarathustra knocks on the door to ask for food. When the old man appears and asks 'Who comes to me and to my bad sleep?' Zarathustra responds: 'A living man and a dead one. … Give me food and drink, I forgot it during the day. Whoever feeds the hungry quickens his own soul—thus speaks wisdom.' Interestingly, however, the old man says to Zarathustra: 'But bid your companion eat and drink, he is wearier than you,' to which Zarathustra responds, in reminder, 'My companion is dead, I would

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"true" for us is what we "live out," then there is a very real sense in which our religion has become so debased that video games and movie stars are sanctified and worshipped as if they were gods. On the grand scale, it is not too much of a stretch at all to suggest that contemporary society places more value on the media coverage of these so-called superstars than on the "real" people that concern us more directly: our family, friends, and neighbours, for examples. The trouble, of course, is that these modern-day gods and goddesses are so superficial and fleeting that they offer no substantial meaning to our lives.

have a hard time persuading him.' The old man, *snapping* back, says that 'That does not concern me … Whoever knocks at my house must also take what I offer him' (*Z* Prologue, 8). Clearly, the old man is more concerned about doing what he thinks is "required" of him than he is about "why" it is that these actions are required of him.

As noted above, Nietzsche is not claiming that there is "no one" in the world who is genuinely religious. Nietzsche does not claim that God does not exist, but that *God is dead.* In this respect, we might think of the old saint in the forest, the first person Zarathustra encounters after his descent from his mountain solitude. The old man, searching for roots in the woods, appears 'suddenly' before Zarathustra (*Z* Prologue, 2). The sudden appearance and hermit lifestyle of the saint suggests that he is not quite human. Indeed, because God, the object of his existence, is dead, the saint can be nothing more than a ghost—like a *shade of the underworld.* That is to say, his beliefs are no longer what effectively inform humanity and he is thus relegated to the forest which lies at the edge of civilization. When asked what he is doing in the forest, the saint replies:

> I make songs and sing them, and when I make songs I laugh, weep and *growl*: thus I praise God.
>
> With singing, weeping, laughing and *growling* I praise the god who is my god' (*Z* Prologue, 2, my emphasis).

In the German, the word used for "growling" is '*brummen*' (*ASZ* "*Zarathustras Vorrede*," 2), which can also be translated as grumbling, rumbling, muttering, or mumbling. The intimation here is that the saint's singing is *unintelligible uttering* and *noise making* which is no longer meaningful and is thus more animal than human: the growling of 'a bear among bears' (*Z* Prologue, 2). Nevertheless, God still effectively informs the old saint's reality so God is still in effect *alive* for the saint. But the saint is

an old man who is less than human and living out his existence apart from the modern community. Zarathustra quickly leaves the saint without informing him of God's death so as to not take that reality away from him. Indeed, it would be presumptuous for Zarathustra to think that he could take this belief away from the saint because what is at issue is not a truth about this or that objective reality but the effective reality of the modern world. Thus understood, the encounter with the old saint serves as a device to set the scene for *Zarathustra* (and, speaking more broadly, for Nietzsche's thinking about religion as a whole) by showing that the death of God is what effectively informs the reality of those who are truly a part of what is really going on in the world and that those who still believe are on the sidelines of humanity and must simply live out their existence. Nietzsche's suggestion, then, is that those like the saint who live outside the modern community are effectively less than human because they no longer value *being* human.

It is important to note, however, that the madman's pronouncement of the death of God is not simply a matter of belief in the sense that some sociological survey has been conducted and has revealed that the majority of people no longer believe in the existence of God.[17] What Nietzsche is concerned with is not a matter of this or that person's belief, but the very way in which we as a culture (or, on Nietzsche's view, lack thereof) "live out" our lives. The essential mark of modern times, as Nietzsche sees it, is that our effective reality is no longer shaped by belief in God, but we have not yet fully disabused ourselves of the beliefs that formerly gave meaning and

[17] Interesting to point out, however, is that such a survey has in fact been recently conducted. Though, regrettably, I do not have the exact reference, and so shall leave the source unnamed, a weekly Canadian news programme announced that a recent survey (2006) conducted in the United States revealed that well over 50 percent of Americans no longer believe in God. Nietzsche himself, I am sure, would be charmed.

structure to our lives. In the words of the madman, this, in part, is because 'deeds need time, even after they are done, in order to be seen and heard' (*GS* 125). Our belief in the transcendent, theistic God of Christianity, for example, has come to inhibit the self-development of humanity through our self-enslavement to this conception. Because belief in this theistic God entails that no other account of reality is allowed to exist, for example, adherence to this religious ideal teases out an illusion that stands in the way of our will to create a better, more, or at least differently meaningful existence. The modern predicament is thus one of religious frustration that does not recognize itself as such because the very ways in which we conduct our lives, be it through our scientific investigations, philosophical inquiry, or simply our everyday, mundane actions, are no longer effectively informed by belief in God, even though the modern world still pays lip-service to the idea of a transcendent God. It is this sort of religious attitude that leads the madman to ask: 'What then are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchres of God?' (*GS* 125). Because God no longer effectively informs our lives, churches can be nothing more than the tombs and sepulchres of God. In other words, although not necessarily realized as such, because God is dead the religious rituals that take place within the church effectively represent little more than the funeral rights of a deceased deity.

The second sense in which the religious attitude of modern times reveals to Nietzsche that God is dead thus concerns the ways in which our effective reality *is* constructed. God is already effectively dead in the *minds* of his contemporaries as a result of the advances of both modern philosophy and modern science. Concerning the latter, Lampert argues that Nietzsche's conversations with and observations of

contemporary scientists suggest that the 'intellectual conscience hardened by modern science seems to find the Christian God unbelievable and intolerable' (Lampert 2001, 111). Although much more needs to be said about modern scientific practice than space permits, I take Lampert's point to be that modern science itself is what effectively informs and shapes our reality as it is lived out. This is in large part because the modern scientific project offers the promise through the equation of knowledge and power that we can take control of things ourselves, and because the Christian concept of God is thus in conflict with our most sophisticated sciences, God is neither believable nor tolerable in light of the advances of the modern sciences that *do* shape our lives. Quite simply, Nietzsche's view is that what is true for us in the world here and now is what is set up by scientific inquiry, not God.

Another way to think about this is that the modern scientific project of harnessing the power of nature and manipulating it for our purposes has supplanted the traditional philosophical project. Under the Platonic model, the traditional philosophical project was guided by the idea that all things have "essential" natures (or souls) and we fulfill that nature through the contemplation and imitation of the divine order of things. But the modern scientific project, guided by the idea that things are a matter of forces and knowledge a matter of our calculative power over these forces of nature, has replaced the traditional philosophical project. It is, as I have been suggesting, modern science, and not God, that is the effective reality for the modern world. That we no longer effectively believe in the traditional philosophical project of escaping the "apparent world" in order to contemplate and imitate the "true world" is what, for Nietzsche, both informs and occasions the death of God. With the death of

God the idea that there could be transcendent truths and values that are revealed by reason and/or religion no longer carries any weight for modern philosophical and scientific inquiry, thus revealing the need for a new way of thinking about truth.

As I have been arguing, Nietzsche's view is that God is alive only insofar as He informs our effective reality. That is, God is only alive when He is *alive for us*. This differs radically from the traditional biblical laments of God's absence: 'Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy? Will you torment a windblown leaf?' (Job 13:24-25), for example. Nietzsche's observation, then, is not a claim about some "eternal" truth, but is rather, a claim about what is "true" *for us* in the world *here* and *now*. As I have been suggesting, Nietzsche thus introduces an element of historicity into the notion of truth.[18] In other words, our ultimate truths are not simply "there" for us to discover by means of rational discourse, nor are they given from above via religious revelation. As Zarathustra puts this point:

> Indeed, humans gave themselves all their good and evil. Indeed, they did not take it, they did not find it, it did not fall to them as a voice from heaven.
>
> Humans first placed values into things, in order to preserve themselves – they first created meaning for things, a human meaning!
>
> That is why they call themselves "human," that is: the esteemer.
>
> Esteeming is creating: hear me, you creators! Esteeming itself is the treasure and jewel of all esteemed things.
>
> Only through esteeming is there value, and without esteeming the nut of existence would be hollow (*Z* I, "On a Thousand and One Goals").

Viewed from a perspective which has appropriated the death of God, we see that our truths and values have meaning for us only insofar as we create them and "esteem" value in them.

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[18] It is key to notice that the inclusion of a historical dimension to truth is not itself a novel contribution. Kant instructs us in the Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* to appreciate that the need for a critique of pure reason is itself a historically situated project; Hegel argues that all forms of cognition—be it knowledge or faith—are both historically relativized and constructed. The important difference, however, is that, while the situatedness of historicity features in both Kant and Hegel's thought, neither is engaged in a genealogical account of truth in the way that Nietzsche thinks is instructive.

It is important to point out, however, that this is not *simply* a rejection of absolute truth or, in Platonic terms, the "true world" in favour of the "apparent world," but is a *reconsideration* and *transformation* of the very way in which we engage in the traditional philosophical project itself. As Nietzsche puts this point in *Twilight of the Idols*, for instance: 'We have abolished the real world: what world is left? The apparent world perhaps? ... But no! *with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!*' (*TI* "How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth," 6). Nietzsche's point is that by denying the existence of the "real (true) world" we do not thereby embrace the "apparent (false) world," but rather overcome the dichotomy itself. In other words, it is not a matter of either the "real world" is true or the "apparent world" is true. Rather, what is at issue here is that the death of God reveals to us that the dichotomy itself is false. As such, we need to reconfigure the ways in which we understand the only world of importance to us: our world. The truth that Nietzsche is suggesting, that there is only *perspectival* knowing, is a truth of *being* in the world *here* and *now*. All thinking begins from some *where* at some *time*. In a world that is effectively informed by the death of God adherence to the notion of a disinterested view from nowhere, for Nietzsche, amounts to intellectual dishonesty: a '*sacrifizio dell'intelletto*' (*BGE* 229) or, stated more violently, a *castration* of the intellect (*GM* III, 12). The new perspective from which Nietzsche is suggesting we engage in philosophical discourse is one that is situated in and gives meaning to *this* world because it is *this* world that concerns *us* directly.

The upshot of the historically defining event of the death of God is that, once appropriated into our effective reality, we are afforded a perspective from which to

realize our creative power. It is from the perspective of the death of God that Nietzsche is able to give a *genealogical* account of that creative power and how it was that we, although (perhaps) unknowingly, created the *other-worldly*. Once disabused of *other-worldly* illusions that have come to inhibit our creative power, we are afforded a perspective from which to create a better, more, or at least differently meaningful existence for ourselves. I will consider some of the ways in which Nietzsche suggests we employ our creative power in Chapter Three and, more fully, in Chapter Four below. For the present, however, Chapter Two will examine the genealogical account suggested by Nietzsche in more detail by considering how Nietzsche understands the psychological origins and implications of belief in a transcendent God and what he sees as the fundamental distinction between a healthy and neurotic religious being.

Chapter Two

A Genealogy of Religious Being: The Healthy and Neurotic

> In the great fatality of Christianity, Plato is that ambiguity and fascination called the "ideal" which made it possible for the nobler natures of antiquity to misunderstand themselves and to step on the bridge which led to the "Cross." ... And how much there still is of Plato in the concept "Church", in the structure, system, practice of the Church! (*TI* "Ancients," 2).
>
> 'O Crito, I owe Asclepius a rooster.' This ridiculous and terrible 'last word' means for those who have ears: 'O Crito, *life is a disease*.' (*GS* 340).

In Chapter One we saw that the death of God, for Nietzsche, allows us a perspective from which our role as creators of our ultimate truths and values is revealed to us. It is thus from the perspective of the death of God that Nietzsche is able to provide a genealogical account of what has been esteemed as "truth" so far. This new perspective also provides us with some insights required for the creation of new truths and values. Although Nietzsche's genealogical account represents a 'revaluation of our values so far, the great war' (*EH* "Books," *BGE* 1), this destructive, No-saying aspect of Nietzsche's project is, I think, best understood as a meta-critique of normativity, issued from a perspective that is effectively informed by the historical death of God and with the aim of developing a *positive* doctrine that remains faithful to life in this world.[19] I treat the positive doctrine Nietzsche develops in Chapters

[19] It is crucial to note that Nietzsche is not offering a meta-critique in the sense of the traditional view from nowhere or a God's eye view. What I mean by meta-critique is that Nietzsche wants us to ask what the "value" of our values is for us: 'we finally came to a complete standstill in front of an even more fundamental question. We asked about the *value* of this will' (*BGE* 1). It is key to note, then, that no privileged epistemological standpoint is assumed here and no overarching moral theory is appealed to either. For Nietzsche, the only horizon of meaning is ours, what we create, what we make, and what we esteem. Thus understood, the meta-critique of values that is being suggested by Nietzsche is simply one that is challenging us to seriously engage in an evaluation of what it is that we *claim* to believe and

Three and Four below. In the present chapter I offer an exegetical interpretation of *Beyond Good and Evil* § 49 in order to highlight three inter-related themes in Nietzsche's genealogical account of "truth": the historical trajectory or tradition within which Nietzsche is working and his reasons for singling out Socrates and Christ, Platonism and Christianity, as his principal antipodes for his attacks on religion; Nietzsche's distinction between a healthy and neurotic religious being; and what are, on Nietzsche's view, some of the psychological origins of belief in a transcendent, theistic God.

Nietzsche opens aphorism 49 of *Beyond Good and Evil* praising the religious being of the ancient Greeks. He writes: 'What is amazing about the religiosity of ancient Greeks is the excessive amount of *gratitude* that flows from it: – it takes a very noble type of person to face nature and life like *this*!' (*BGE* 49, my emphasis). As Lampert points out, Nietzsche is here referring specifically to the 'Greeks born out of Homer, the educator of Greece who, "like the wisest, knew the secret of all life" (*Z* 2 "On the Tarantulas"), and who taught the highest civilization yet achieved to stand before nature and life in gratitude' (Lampert 2001, 108). It takes a "very noble type of person" to stand before nature and life with gratitude because the terrors and horrors experienced in life are often enough to make the strongest among us tremble with fear. Nature itself, for instance, is 'profligate without measure, indifferent without measure, without purpose and regard, without mercy and justice, fertile and barren and uncertain at the same time, [nature is] indifference itself as power' (*BGE* 9). Moreover, nature's seemingly senseless destruction is often augmented by the

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what it is that we actually *do* believe, while demanding that we take responsibility for our beliefs and our role in the creation of these beliefs.

pointless suffering arising from our own stupidity and our inhumanity towards one another. As Nietzsche so often points out, the Greeks knew this terrible truth about life all too well. In the *Birth of Tragedy*, for instance, Nietzsche discusses an old Greek folk wisdom's response to the terrors and horrors of life: King Midas, the story goes, hunted down and asked Silenus, demigod and companion of Dionysus, 'what was the best and most desirable of all things for man.' With a 'shrill laugh,' Silenus answered: 'Oh, wretched ephemeral race, children of chance and misery, why do you compel me to tell you what it would be most expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is—to die soon' (*BT* 3). But the Homeric Greeks, perhaps *in spite of* Silenus' wisdom, were able to endure their horribly violent existence 'with such inexplicable gaiety' (*BT* 3).

What amazed Nietzsche about the Greeks was both how they were themselves able to live with Silenus' wisdom and how their example can still serve to 'seduce *us* to life' (*BT* "Attempt as a Self-Criticism," 1, my emphasis).[20] As he notes in an unpublished essay, "The Dionysiac World View," Nietzsche saw that the Greeks were able to bear their horribly violent lives by transforming 'those repulsive thoughts about the terrible and absurd aspects of existence into representations with which it was possible to live' (*BT* 1999, 130). The Homeric Greeks, for instance, were able to endure the terrible and horrible truth of their existence by telling themselves stories that made life itself bearable for them. Although the Homeric world view is one of

[20] Young makes the following remarks on the relevance of Nietzsche's fascination with the Greeks for us: 'Ostensibly he is commenting, *qua* historian, on the ancient world. But since history is only interesting in so far as it provides a "polished mirror" in which to view ourselves (*HH* II a 218), in so far as it is "relevant", he is, at the same time, speaking about *us* and *our* possible responses to these universal phenomena [to "nausea" and "absurdity", to pain and death]' (Young 15).

illusion in the sense that the terrors and horrors of existence are thus 'veiled and withdrawn from sight' (*BT* 3), it is important to note that Homer[21] did not intend to *conceal* them. Rather, the triumph of the religious being of the Homeric Greeks is that, in and through their artistic representations of the Homeric pantheon, for example, they were able to celebrate the good *as well as* the nauseating and absurd in life. For the Homeric Greeks *life itself was inherently desirable* and what speaks out of the Homeric gods is thus 'a *religion of life*, not one of duty or asceticism or spirituality. All these figures breathe the *triumph of existence*, a *luxuriant vitality* accompanies their cult. They do not make demands; *all that exists is deified in them, regardless of whether it is good or evil*' (*BT* 1999, 124, my emphasis). The Greek victory over the horrors of existence is thus not only that they were able to endure life's tragedies, but that they stood before nature and life with a resounding "*Yes*!"

Homeric religion is a celebration of life, an unbounded *gratitude* for all of existence "regardless of whether it is good or evil." It is this Homeric gratitude that that allowed the Greeks to overcome the pessimism of Silenus and thrive in an optimism born out of pessimism. Nietzsche elaborates this point in "The Dionysiac World View," where he writes:

> Under the influence of such a religion life is understood in the Homeric world as that which is inherently desirable: life beneath the sunshine of such gods. The pain of Homeric man related to departure from this existence, above all to imminent departure. If a lament is heard at all, it sings again of short-lived Achilles, of the rapid succession of the generations of mankind, of the passing of the heroic age. It is not

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[21] There is, of course, an interpretive problem with the Homeric epics. Often referred to as the "Homeric question," it is debated whether or not it was the same Homer who wrote both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; whether or not there really was a "Homer"; if there was a Homer, are the epics his own compositions entirely or was it mere happenstance that Homer was the one who committed them to writing, himself simply having been part of the long oral tradition? For the purposes of this thesis, however, I am less concerned about this "Homeric question" than I am with what Homer represents for Nietzsche and so shall simply refer to Homer as Homer.

> unworthy of the greatest hero to long to go on living, even as a day-labourer (*BT* 1999, 125).

Thus reversing the wisdom of Silenus, the Greeks justified their existence to themselves precisely because the gods too lived it (*BT* 3). It was this *attitude* towards existence which made suffering bearable to the Homeric Greeks. Tragically, however, there would be a marked shift in the religious being of the Greeks in the 5th Century BCE, and the magnificence of Homeric gratitude would be lost. Specifically, we see in the character of Socrates a radical transvaluation of classical values which would move 'from a noble gratitude to popular fear' (Lampert 2001, 108). This popular fear, in turn, marks a shift from the *life-affirming* religious being of the Homeric Greeks, to a profound *hostility* toward life. It is Platonic and Christian religious being in particular that Nietzsche appropriates to make this last point.

The final sentence in *Beyond Good and Evil* § 49 reads: 'Later, when the rabble gained prominence in Greece, religion became overgrown with *fear* as well, and Christianity was on the horizon. –' (*BGE* 49). As we have seen, the Homeric Greeks viewed life as inherently desirable, affirming even the 'fearsome and questionable' (*TI* "What Germans Lack," 24) about existence and standing before life and nature with *gratitude* (χάρις). Nietzsche plumps the character of Socrates—the 'agent of the dissolution of Greece' (*TI* "Socrates" 2)—to make the point that the religious being of the later Greeks is *neurotic* in the sense that it transforms the noble Homeric *gratitude* toward life into a profound *hostility* toward life. In the religious being of these Socratic (or Platonic[22]) Greeks we see the Homeric gods replaced with

[22] Interpreters of Plato's dialogues all face the challenge of discerning where Socrates' views end and Plato's begin. These interpretive problems notwithstanding, for the purposes of this thesis I am less concerned with whether it is Socrates' or Plato's voice we hear in the dialogues than I am with *what* is

moral gods and the Homeric mortal soul replaced with the promise of the Socratic immortal soul. Unlike the 'noble old Greeks [who] stood gratefully before nature and life,' Lampert points out, the 'Platonic Greeks knelt before gods who decided the destiny of their immortal souls … a slavish subjugation to invented supernatural powers' (Lampert 2001, 108-9). That is, what is affirmed by the Platonic Greeks is *not* life itself, but what lies "beyond" life, the "after-worldly" or "hinter-worldly." So, as Nietzsche remarks in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Socrates (Plato) was the 'sincerest "advocate of the beyond", the great slanderer of life … Plato *versus* Homer: that is complete, genuine antagonism' (*GM* III, 23). Important to note, however, is that this antagonism is not, as Lampert suggests, an antagonism between Platonic philosophy and Homeric religion. Rather, it is a complete, genuine antagonism of two powerful religions (Lampert 2001, 108). Furthermore, it is crucial to add that this antagonism is not to be understood as being between Nietzsche and either Socrates or Platonism or Christ or Christianity, for examples. Rather, it is an antagonism between what Nietzsche sees as a *healthy* and *neurotic* religious being.

Although Nietzsche's relentless assaults on both Christianity and Platonism are most often scathing and unforgiving, it is my contention that Nietzsche's attitude towards both Christianity and Platonism, as untenable as this claim might at first seem in the light of the usual readings, is not one of unadulterated hostility. In *Beyond Good and Evil* § 62, for example, Nietzsche suggests that Christianity and Buddhism are 'the two greatest religions' (*BGE* 62). Such praise suggests to me a profound respect for

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being claimed at a meta-level. For whether or not it is Socrates' views or Plato's, the Platonic dialogues undertake a transformation of Homeric values, and it is this transvaluation of classical values that is of concern for this thesis. Thus, unless specified otherwise, I shall use the terms "Socratic" and Platonic" interchangeably when referring to the views expounded in the Platonic dialogues.

Christianity, despite all of Nietzsche's criticisms of it. Young makes a similar point, also with regard to *Beyond Good and Evil* § 62. Specifically, Young draws attention to Nietzsche's suggestion that Christianity 'turns the human being into a "sublime abortion" (*BGE* 62)' (Young 122). The 'combination of "sublime" with "abortion",' Young contends, 'suggests that there is a certain upside to Christianity, that Nietzsche's attitude is not one of *unmitigated* hostility' (Young 123). Furthermore, in a letter to Peter Gast, Nietzsche remarks that 'after all [Christianity] is the best example of the ideal life I have really come to know; I have pursued it from childhood on, and I do not think that my heart has ever dealt meanly with it' (Nietzsche to Peter Gast, July 21, 1881, quoted in Jaspers 2). As we shall see, it is the *religious attitude* taken towards life by the *characters* of Christ and Socrates that Nietzsche takes exception to, and not necessarily Christ or Socrates themselves. It is important to note, moreover, that Nietzsche's attacks are not representative of a "blanket critique" of all denominations or sects of Christianity, nor is it aimed at all forms of religion in general. What I want to suggest here is that Nietzsche uses Christianity in particular as a place-holder for his attacks on religious world-views that appeal to what is *other-worldly*. In other words, Nietzsche's critique—critique understood as an assault on modernity, "the revaluation of our values so far, *the great war*" (my emphasis)— is aimed at religions that advocate asceticism over life. Understanding both that Nietzsche's attacks are neither personal nor exclusive to Christianity *qua* Christianity, for instance, will be important for appreciating his positive religious teaching.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche presents us with a summation of his 'practice of war,' noting first that an *honest* duel presupposes 'equality before the enemy.'

Socrates, for instance, may well represent for Nietzsche what is decadent about antiquity (*TI* "Socrates 2), but that Nietzsche respects Socrates as a worthy opponent, I think, should never be in doubt.[23] To make it clear that his method of warfare is conducted with ulterior motives, Nietzsche continues:

> I never attack persons; I merely avail myself of the person as of a strong magnifying glass that allows one to make visible a general but creeping and elusive calamity.... I attack only things when every personal quarrel is excluded, when any background of bad experiences is lacking. On the contrary, attack is in my case a proof of good will, sometimes even of gratitude.... I myself, an opponent of Christianity *de rigueur*, am far from blaming individuals for the calamity of millennia (*EH* "Why I am so Wise," 7).

So while Nietzsche thinks that Socrates prepares the ground for Christianity, 'Platonism for the "people"' (*BGE* Preface), that he is talking about Socrates, Plato, or Christianity in particular is, in a sense, precisely beside the point. As Kaufmann notes, the *destructive* element of Nietzsche's writings are 'not vented on individuals or directed against life or the world; they are mobilized in the service of life and creativity against obstructions, movements, causes' (Kaufmann 1992, 664). The religious attitude engendered by Socrates, for example, is an obstruction to life precisely because it says "*No*!" to life. Like the wisest men of every age, Nietzsche points out, Socrates concludes that life '*is worthless*': 'Socrates said as he died: 'To live – that means to be a long time sick: "I owe a cock to the saviour Asclepius." Even Socrates had had enough of it' (*TI* "Socrates" 1). Nietzsche's interpretation of Socrates' final words is clear: *life is a sickness* and Asclepius, being the demigod of healing, is to be compensated for *curing* Socrates of this sickness.[24] While there is certainly much room for debate concerning the actual meaning of Socrates' final

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[23] In *Beyond Good and Evil* § 14, for instance, Nietzsche remarks that the Platonic (Socratic) way of thinking 'was a *noble* way of thinking' (*BGE* 14, my emphasis).

[24] The "cure," of course, is Socrates' having been sentenced to drink hemlock.

words, we should remember that Nietzsche's interpretation is motivated by his attack on the *other-worldliness* of the Socratic world-view.[25] As we see in his discussion of 'the psychological *type* of the redeemer' (*A* 29) in the *Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche makes a similar point about the religious attitude *traditionally* seen in the character of Christ.

In *Anti-Christ* § 29, Nietzsche introduces Christ as "the psychological type of the redeemer." As he there points out, what concerns him principally is '*Not* the truth about what [Christ] did, what he said, how he really died: but the question *whether* his type is still conceivable at all, whether it has been "handed down" by tradition' (*A* 29). In other words, Nietzsche's interest in Christ does not at all concern who Christ the man *really* was. Moreover, it is not clear that this question would even make sense in Nietzschean terms. Rather, the question that has primacy for Nietzsche is whether or not the religious *attitude* presented by the "psychological type of the redeemer" handed down by tradition is either possible or desirable for the modern world. Nietzsche's answer to both questions is a resounding "*No*!" Although the analogy is not explicitly made, I think that Nietzsche's point is clear enough: the character of both Socrates and Christ are the same "type."

Section 35 of the *Anti-Christ* implicitly draws this analogy more clearly and is worth quoting at length. (Recall, however, that Nietzsche is not here concerned with the "historical" Christ, but rather Christ as "traditionally" handed down to us.[26])

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[25] For an excellent discussion on various interpretations of Socrates' final words see Alexander Nehamas' *The Art of Living*, in particular chapters 5 and 6.

[26] In *Anti-Christ* § 28, Nietzsche comments on the practice of employing the stories of saints as literal truths: 'The stories of saints are the most ambiguous literature in existence: to apply to them scientific procedures when no other records are extant seems to me wrong in principle – mere learned idling…' (*A* 28). The accounts we have of both Socrates and Christ, for examples, are all second hand: neither wrote anything themselves. Moreover, ambiguities about the characters of each are prevalent throughout the written documentations of their lives that have come down to us. We might ask, for examples: Should we take Plato at his word when he talks about Socrates' dying words? After all, Plato

> This "bringer of glad tidings" [Christ] died as he lived, as he *taught—not* to "redeem mankind" but to demonstrate how one ought to live. What he bequeathed to mankind is his *practice*: his bearing before the judges, before the guards, before the accusers and every kind of calumny and mockery—his bearing on the *Cross*. He does not resist, he does not defend his rights, he takes no step to avert the worst that can happen to him—more, *he provokes it* (*A* 35).

Like Socrates, Nietzsche claims, Christ taught that one must not turn from one's duty or calling when faced with death or danger—surely, this in itself is a *noble* teaching. (Socrates puts the point thusly in the *Apology*: 'You are wrong, sir, if you think that a man who is any good at all should take into account the risk of life or death; he should look to this only in his actions, whether what he does is right or wrong, whether he is acting like a good or a bad man' [*Apology* 28d].) However, again not at all unlike Socrates, in so doing Christ displays a profound *hostility* towards life. The Hebrews did not initially want to kill Christ any more than the Athenians did Socrates. While I do not here have the space necessary to examine the point in detail, I think (based on the account given is Plato's *Apology*, at any rate) Nietzsche is correct in his assessment that 'Socrates *wanted* to die—it was not Athens, it was *he* who handed himself the poison cup, who compelled Athens to hand him the poison cup' (*TI* "Socrates," 12).[27] Similarly, Nietzsche thinks, *Christ wanted to die*. Despair and suffering from life made Christ turn his back on this world and look towards the promised world "beyond" for redemption for his suffering: 'He still knew only tears

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makes it abundantly clear that he was not himself present at Socrates' execution. Do we completely dismiss Aristophanes' accounts of Socrates as mere satire? And how are we to read the discrepancies between Xenophon's and Plato's Socrates? And why should we take only the Gospels sanctioned by Constantine as legitimate and discredit all of the Gnostic Gospels that have survived and re-surfaced throughout history?

[27] It is interesting to point out that Nietzsche judgment here, quoted from one of his final published works, is consistent with his first published work, *The Birth of Tragedy*: 'that he was sentenced to death, not exile, Socrates himself seems to have brought about with perfect awareness and without any natural awe of death. He went to his death with the calm with which, according to Plato's description, he leaves the Symposium at dawn, the last of the revelers, to begin a new day, while on the benches and on the earth his drowsy table companions remain behind to dream of Socrates, the true eroticist' (*BT* 13).

and the melancholy of the Hebrews, together with the hatred of the good and the just – the Hebrew Jesus; then longing for death overcame him (*Z* I, "On Free Death"). That the psychological type of the redeemer redeems suffering by *negating* life in favour of the promise of some heavenly reward is one reason for Nietzsche's hostility towards both Christ and Socrates.

Beyond Good and Evil § 59 expands on this last point. With a 'passionate and exaggerated worship of "pure forms"' both Christ and Socrates turned their suffering into 'a sort of prolonged revenge against life' (*BGE* 59). This religious attitude, on Nietzsche's view, is one of *self-mutilation* in the sense that it literally attempts to sever oneself from one's bodily (earthly) existence. In other words, life has been spoiled for them and 'they want to see its image distorted, diluted, deified, and cast into the beyond' (*BGE* 59). What is noble about this religious attitude is that it does offer a response to the first two functions of authentic religion I outlined in the Introduction: it purports to offer consolation for death and redemption for pain and suffering. Moreover, this religious attitude also responds to the third function of authentic religion in the sense that it offers this redemption to the people (or at least those people faithful to this particular religious view)—recall that Nietzsche characterizes Christianity as "Platonism for the people." There is also something of the mysterious in this religious attitude's promise of the heavenly unknown: it is veiled from the common people, but is revealed to the saint through some form of divine revelation. It is crucial to notice, however, that it is not because the religious attitude of Christ and Socrates *falsifies* the world that Nietzsche stands in opposition to them. These religious men lie no less than did Homer, for example. In fact, Nietzsche thinks that

'considered as artists, the *homines religiosi* would belong to the *highest* rank' (*BGE* 59). Again, what is of principal concern for Nietzsche is the religious *attitude* these *homines religiosi* take towards existence. In other words, it is not that they lie, but the lies that they tell in particular and the consequences of these lies—that they say *No*! to life—that are at issue.

It was Socratism that gave birth to Platonism. As Nietzsche puts this point in *The Birth of Tragedy*: '*The dying Socrates* became the new ideal, never seen before, of noble Greek youths: above all, the typical Hellenic youth, Plato, prostrated himself before this image with all the ardent devotion of his enthusiastic soul' (*BT* 13). Platonism sets up a two-world dichotomy, claiming that the world in which we life is mere appearance, whereas the "true" world lies beyond or behind this world and makes it possible. All our instincts are brought under the yoke of reason—'Reason = virtue = happiness' (*TI* "Socrates," 10)—and as such are deprived of their authority: the instincts are not allowed to count as true; only the Good as such is considered "True." One consequence of Platonism is thus the devaluing of all things *this-worldly* in favour of *other-worldly* ideals. Likewise, Christianity, following upon the example of the dying Christ, sanctifies all that is "beyond" this world at the expense of life itself. As Nietzsche remarks in his preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, 'Christianity was from the beginning, essentially and fundamentally, *life's nausea and disgust with life, merely concealed behind, masked by, dressed up as, faith in "another" or "better" life*' (*BT* "Attempt At A Self-Criticism," 5, my emphasis). The ultimate consequence of both Platonism and Christianity, however, is not only the destruction of all classical values, but also that the accounts given by both negate the legitimacy of any *other*

view whatsoever—including any that purport to supply meaning and value for this life. As Nietzsche comments in the *Anti-Christ*: 'one demands that no other kind of perspective shall be accorded any value after one has rendered one's own sacrosanct with the names "God", "redemption", "eternity"' (*A* 9). Simply, no other god and no other account of reality are allowed to exist. In other words, the *homines religiosi* assume that our absolute truths and values are "out there" for us to discover by means of rational deliberation or divine revelation, and no other truths or values are allowed to be held before these: 'I am the LORD your God … you shall have no other gods before me' (Exodus 20:2).[28] As we saw in Chapter One, the eventual outcome of this religious dogmatism is a profound religious tension that does not realize itself as such. That is, Nietzsche's diagnosis of the modern world is that these *other-worldly* ideals are no longer tenable—God is dead!—although our religious being adheres to a religious attitude that is in direct conflict with our reality as it is lived out in the world here and now.

Notwithstanding the consequences of the lies told by the *homines religiosi*, human psychology to date, Nietzsche claims, has been 'shipwrecked' precisely on the issue of the psychological type of the redeemer, whom Nietzsche addresses as the "saint" in *Beyond Good and Evil*. The danger presented by the saint was the

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[28] Zarathustra assures us, however, that the old gods:

> truly … had a good cheerful gods' end!
>
> They did not "twilight" themselves to death—that is surely a lie! Instead, they just up and *laughed* themselves to death!
>
> This happened when the most godless words were uttered by a god himself—the words: "There is one god. Thou shalt have no other god before me!"—
>
> —an old grim-beard of a god, a jealous one forgot himself in this way:
>
> And all the gods laughed then rocked in their chairs and cried: "Is godliness not precisely that there are gods but no God?" (*Z* III, "On Apostates," 2).

'inordinate[29] interest' elicited from 'among people of all kinds in all ages, and even among philosophers, it was undoubtedly a miracle that clung to it; it displayed the immediate *succession of opposites*, of authentically valorized moral states of soul. It seemed palpable that here was a "bad man" turning suddenly into a good man, a "saint"' (*BGE* 47). Another way to think about this "bad man" is in terms of pain and suffering, the nausea and absurdity of life. That is, one sees that the saint suffers no more so perhaps one might also rid oneself of one's suffering if one kneels before (or like) the saint. The saint, for example, offers consolation to pain and suffering and the reality of one's eventual death in the form the promise of eternal life. People prostrate themselves before the saint, thinking: 'Perhaps there is a reason for it, perhaps the ascetic has inside information about some very great danger, thanks to his secret counsellors and visitors?' (*BGE* 51).[30] However, on Nietzsche's view, it was (is) ultimately *fear* that led (leads) people to kneel before the saint:

> Entire millennia sink their teeth into a religious interpretation of existence, driven by a deep, suspicious fear of an incurable pessimism; this fear comes from an instinct which senses that we could get hold of the truth *too soon*, before people have become strong enough, hard enough, artistic enough … Seen in this light, piety—the "life in God"—appears as the last and most subtle monstrosity produced by *fear* of the truth; it appears as the artists' worship and intoxication before the most consistent of all falsifications, as the will to invert the truth, the will to untruth at any price. Perhaps piety has been the most potent method yet for the beautification of humanity: it can turn people into art, surface, plays of colors, benevolence, and to such an extent that we can finally look at them without suffering. — (*BGE* 59).

Unlike the Homeric Greeks, who saw the terrible and horrible truth about existence and were able to make play with it and turn it into representations that allowed them to live with the absurd and nauseating in life, the *homines religiosi* got a hold of this truth

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[29] Notice the explicit use of Socrates' language: 'I should have to be inordinately fond of life' (*Apology* 37c).

[30] I will have more to say about this particular passage in relation to my discussion of will to power in Chapter Three below.

"too soon" and, although they created an artistic response to their suffering, which is itself a noble response, theirs is effectively a creation "beyond" life. Simply, both the *fear* of and inability to live with the truth led them to seek consolation for pain and suffering "beyond" this world. Such response, however, comes at the expense of any meaning and value for this world and this life, the only world that truly has any meaning for us. As such, the pain and suffering of this world are covered up and sugar-coated to the point where they are no longer considered to be really real. The abundant amount of gratitude with which the Homeric Greeks stood before life and existence, it seems, is no longer to be found in the religious attitude of the *homines religiosi*.

Zarathustra's speech "On the Hinterworldly" helps to sum up some of the points I have been making in this chapter. Zarathustra makes explicit the psychological (psychological in an archaic original sense of a genuine *logos* of the soul, not in the modern sense of a science of mental processes and behaviour) origins of our hitherto held belief in God and the eschatological trappings that accompany such a belief:

> It was suffering and incapacity that created all hinterworlds, and that brief madness of happiness that only the most suffering person experiences.
>
> Weariness that wants its ultimate with one great leap, with a death leap; a poor unknowing weariness that no longer even wants to will: that created all gods and hinterworlds. ...
>
> But "the other world" is hidden well from humans, that dehumaned, inhuman world that is a heavenly nothing. And the belly of being does not speak at all to humans, unless as human. ...
>
> It was the sick and the dying-out who despised the body and the earth and invented the heavenly and its redeeming drops of blood. But even these sweet shadowy poisons they took from the body and the earth!
>
> They wanted to escape their misery and the stars were too distant for them. So they sighed "Oh if only there were heavenly paths on which to sneak into another being and happiness!"—Then they invented their schemes and bloody little drinks! (*Z* I, "On the Hinterworldly").

There are two points I want to emphasize here. First, it was "suffering and incapacity," Nietzsche suggests, that led to the creation of the *hinter-worlds* as a remedy for this suffering. But, Nietzsche argues, not only is this *other-world* is a "heavenly nothing" insofar as it effectively has no meaning for us in the world here and now, but such a "death leap" also engenders an unhealthy religious *neurosis*. (It is important to stress, however, that the lack of meaning of the "other-world" for this world here and now is a historical event. That is, the "other-world" was our effective reality when belief in it was our effective reality.) As Nietzsche puts the point in *Beyond Good and Evil*: 'one of the most regular symptoms of the religious neurosis ... is the most sudden and dissipated display of voluptuousness, which then turns just as suddenly into spasms of repentance and negations of the world and will: perhaps both can be interpreted as epilepsy in disguise?' (*BGE* 47). On the one hand, this type of religious response can be seen as noble to the extent that it offers comfort to the suffering and as such this religious response to pain and suffering attempts to fulfill the second essential function of authentic religion. Moreover, the first essential function of authentic religion is also fulfilled insofar as the heavenly paths into which this religious response sneaks offers the promise and happiness of eternal life. On the other hand, however, Nietzsche sees this religious response as a sort of *neurosis* insofar as it is 'a sort of revenge against life' (*BGE* 59). It is a negation of the world in the sense that the religious being turns away from life itself, and so this response to the first function of authentic religion actually engenders a sort of death rather than providing a remedy for death. What I mean here is that although this religious response purports to provide comfort in the face of death, it is actually a form of death in itself because life itself is negated in

favour of some *other-worldly* illusion that ultimately has no bearing for us in the world here and now.

Similarly, to the extent that what is on offer is redemption in some *other-worldly* realm this response to pain and suffering is also *neurotic* in the sense that it comes at the expense of meaning and value for this world and this life. We saw above that the Homeric response to suffering was to turn it into something beautiful, a representation that not only made it possible for the Homeric Greeks to bathe under the same skies as the gods, but one that also stood before life and nature with a resounding "*Yes*!": Life itself, for the Homeric Greeks, was inherently desirable, suffering and all. We saw also that the response engendered by both Socrates and Christ is one that attempts to negate suffering in the sense that they turn to the *other-worldly* for consolation and redemption from human suffering and misery. In this sense, as Lampert notes,

> Christian faith was a revolt against "the greatest gain of life," the maturity of nuanced civility that had learned a noble stance toward human suffering. The attitude toward suffering is the hinge that distinguishes classical taste from Christian taste: to Christian taste, classical taste seemed "to *deny* suffering," to act as if it were not necessary for God on the Cross to redeem it (Lampert 2001, 105-6).

Notice the suggestion here that the "Christian taste" interpreted the Homeric Greeks as "denying" suffering because they did not see it as necessary for God's grace to redeem suffering. This is interesting for a couple of reasons. First, there is a sense in which the Homeric gods *do* redeem human suffering. What is remarkable about the Homeric vision in the *Iliad*, for instance, is that Homer gives a voice to the vanquished.[31]

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[31] In *Iliad* XXIV we hear Apollo speaking on behalf of 'the dumb earth' (*Iliad* XXIV, 54). That is, Apollo, speaking to the council of gods, gives a voice to the Trojans, and in particular the deceased Hektor, the defeated who thus cannot speak for themselves. Although, in this context, it is to the Trojans in particular that Homer gives a voice, the message is much stronger: Apollo gives a voice to the "dumb earth" in general. In other words, Homer is speaking to us, saying: 'Take heart' and 'do not

Simone Weil, to my mind rightly, suggests that Homer's impartiality is only possible because Homer himself knows what it means to be defeated: The 'extraordinary sense of equity which breathes through the Iliad certainly … has not been imitated' (Weil 32). That is, Homer himself knows what it means to *suffer* defeat and to be subjected to *force*.[32] Second, the Homeric worldview is one that fully embraces suffering, doing so by using suffering to create a beautiful mirror to seduce us to life. That is, Homer uses suffering in the service of life in the sense that we can read Homer and both appreciate and appropriate the excessive amount of gratitude with which he stands before life and nature. As we have seen, however, it is in the service of the *other-worldly* that the Christian taste invented the "God on the cross." In other words, God was necessary to redeem human suffering, but this redemption is realized not in this world, but in some "heavenly nothing." This religious attitude, as Nietzsche might say, views 'suffering itself as something that needs to be *abolished*.' As we shall see in Chapter Four, the Nietzschean attitude toward suffering is more akin to the Homeric attitude: 'We think that harshness, violence, slavery, danger in the streets and in the heart, concealment, Stoicism, the art of experiment, and devilry of every sort; that everything evil, terrible, tyrannical, predatory, and snakelike in humanity serves just as well as its opposite to enhance the species "humanity"' (*BGE* 44).

The Second point I want to make concerning the passage from *Zarathustra* just quoted is that Nietzsche argues that it is, after all, the *body* in which the other-

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be frightened./I come to you not eying you with evil intention/but with the purpose of good toward you. I am a messenger/of Zeus, who far away cares much for you and is pitiful' (*Iliad* XXIV, 171-4).

[32] In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche suggests that Homer was perhaps 'more capable of suffering than any other creature under the sun' (*GS* 302). Certainly, the suffering painted in the *Iliad* 'cannot be guessed: one either is it, or one is not. The great poet dips *only* from his own reality' (*EH* "Clever," 4). Although these comments are made about Shakespearean suffering in particular, I think it safe to assume that Nietzsche would more than welcome the comparison.

worldsmen have the most faith: "the belly of being does not speak at all to humans, unless as human." Simply, to despise the body is to invest the body with power and it is the power of the body that makes it something that must be despised. Nonetheless, just as the denial of the "true world" is not simply a reversal of the dichotomy in favour of the "apparent world," the denial of the spirit cannot be a reversal the soul/body dichotomy. In other words, Nietzsche is not refuting the sprit in favour of the body, but is suggesting new categories for how we understand the problem in the first place. In the speech "On the Despisers of the Body," for instance, Zarathustra states: 'But the awakened, the knowing one says: body am I through and through, and nothing besides; and soul is just a word for something on the body' (*Z* I, "On the Despisers of the Body"). In other words, the soul is not separate from the body, but is viewed as an instrument of the body:

> The self says to the ego: "Feel pain here!" And then it suffers and reflects on how it might suffer no more—and just for that purpose *it is supposed* to think.
>
> The self says to the ego: "Feel pleasure here!" Then it is pleased and reflects on how it might feel pleased more often—and for that purpose *it is supposed* to think (*Z* I, "On the Despisers of the Body").

In sum, the ego is the creator, the will, and the esteemer of all things, but is rooted in and informed by the body which is the "great reason," the self that *makes* possible the ability to think and create beyond itself. In creating the *after-world* as a means to end suffering, however, the ego sacrifices its creative ability and is no longer able to create beyond itself. Thus, the creative will does not understand itself as such because it has unconsciously created the very conditions that would prevent such creative power in its attempt to alleviate its suffering. As I mentioned above, the result is thus a profound religious tension that does not realize itself as such because the "stories" we

have told ourselves not only no longer have any bearing on our effective reality, but they also created the very conditions that have prevented our creating new meaning and value for our lives. In other words, the religious frustration arises because we have continued to try and order our experiences by forcing them into the dogmatic religious formulas we have hitherto fostered. However, these religious formulas are no longer part of what is really going on in the world in the sense that our experiences are in conflict with such religious outlooks. What we really should be doing, on Nietzsche's view, is attempting to understand these religious formulas and ourselves differently, rather than attempting to force our experiences into decadent principles that are no longer meaningful for the modern world. Put another way, the world has changed in the sense that the world that our understanding creates is now understood differently, and so we need to understand anew in the sense of being honest with ourselves about how we understand the world. Part of our new understanding must involve appropriating how we have understood world (and our place in it) hitherto.

However, it is important to note Nietzsche's remarks in the *Twilight of the Idols* about the tendency to will backwards: 'A *revision*, a turning back in any sense and to any degree, is quite impossible. We physiologists at least know that. But all priests and moralists have believed it was possible—they have *wanted* to take mankind back, *force* it back, to an *earlier* standard of virtue' (*TI* "Expeditions of an Untimely Man," 43). Two points are worth noting here. First, we should think of Nietzsche's comments in terms of original sin. For Nietzsche, the "priests" contend that we have "fallen" from some form of divine perfection and it is this model of virtue towards which humankind must strive. But this, as I have been suggesting, is

precisely the problem: this earlier standard of virtue no longer has a place in the modern world. We cannot go backwards, 'one *has* to go forward' (*TI*, "Expeditions of an Untimely Man," 43). Nietzsche thinks that the definitive task of humankind is not to emulate what it has been, but to become what it can make itself to be.[33] This does not mean, however, that nothing can be garnered from what has come before, which brings me to the second point. Although Nietzsche suggests that it is quite impossible to turn back, what has come before can and must be appropriated by the true philosophers, who are '*commanders and legislators*' (*BGE* 211), as they write new tablets of truth and value. One thing in particular that Nietzsche thinks should be appropriated by these new philosophers just is the "excessive amount of gratitude" that flows from the religious being of the Homeric Greeks. I shall have more to say about this last point in the subsequent chapters below.

It is from a perspective informed by the death of God that our role, and therefore *responsibility*, as creators of all truth and value is revealed to us. And it is by appropriating the death of God into our effective reality that affords us a perspective that is beyond good and evil[34] from which we realize our creative potential to create new, more, or at least differently meaningful values. It is from this perspective that Nietzsche's positive religious thinking begins and it is through the cultivation of a new philosophy that Nietzsche hopes to pave the way for the creating of future meaning

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[33] In this regard, I think Nietzsche and Kant are of a piece.

[34] Obviously, Nietzsche is still engaged in dichotomies as is evident from his suggestions of master/slave morality, life-affirming/life-denying perspectives, etc. What is meant by a perspective "beyond good and evil" is not to say that there is no good and no evil, but rather that once we realize that all of our truths and values are not "given" from above or "there" to be found, we realize that it is we ourselves that determine what counts as good and evil. We, as the creators of all truth and value, esteem what is true and what has value *for us*. It is from the perspective of the death of God, and thereby the death of the idea of any transcendent truth whatever, which allows us to overcome our past errors and engage in a project that is meant to give meaning and value to our lives as we live them out *here and now*.

and value for our lives. An important distinction to keep in mind going forward, then, is that, for Nietzsche, beliefs that affirm value for *this world* and *this life* are what represent a *healthy* religious being and thus hold meaning and value. Beliefs that affirm an *other-worldly* existence and denounce the importance of a *this-worldly* existence are to be seen as a form of religious *neurosis*. Those who are rooted in *other-worldly* beliefs are not of importance for Nietzsche:

> I beseech you, my brothers, *remain faithful to the earth* and do not believe those who speak to you of extraterrestrial hopes! They are mixers of poisons whether they know it or not.
>
> They are despisers of life, dying off and self-poisoned, of whom the earth is weary: so let them fade away! (*Z* Prologue, 3).

Nietzsche's primary concern is this world and this life, and those to whom he is speaking in particular are the future philosophers whose task it will be to create new, more meaningful truths and values for this world *here* and *now*. Understood from a perspective that is effectively informed by the death of God, Nietzsche is calling us to action to create and affirm meaning and value, to say *Yes*! to *this* life and to reject outright, to say *No*! to otherworldly *illusions* that devalue it. Although he presents his ideas through "monstrous and terrifying masks," Nietzsche's religious teaching is positive in the sense that he offers a new perspective from which we can understand ourselves and the world within which we live, a perspective that gives meaning and value to this world and this life. I will examine this new perspective, will to power, and how Nietzsche understands it religiously in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Will to Power: "A Vindication of God" (Strauss 192)

> And do you know what "the world" is to me? ... This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself; ... a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years of recurrence, with an ebb and a flood of its forms; ... this, my *Dionysian* world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying ... *This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides! (*WP* 1067).

> Just as soon as a philosophy begins believing in itself [it] always creates the world in its own image, it cannot do otherwise; philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most ***spiritual*** will to power, to the "creation of the world," to the *causa prima* (*BGE* 9, my emphasis).

This Chapter provides an interpretation of Nietzsche's (so-called) doctrine of *will to power*. In the absence of absolute truths and values which are "there" to be discovered, Nietzsche supplies will to power as a *life-affirming* perspective from which *new* truths and values can be affirmed. Since I am here principally concerned with Nietzsche's philosophy of religion, I will focus less on a step by step exegesis of the arguments for will to power and more on how it is Nietzsche sees will to power as being related both to the search after truth and religion. As we shall see, a theory that purports to be "true," on Nietzsche's view, must remain consistent with our effective reality as it is lived out in the world here and now. Will to power does just this, while at the same time paving the way for a *positive* religious outlook that can be *meaningfully* lived out in *this* world, the *only* world that concerns us directly. To this extent, much of my discussion centers on Nietzsche's conception of truth, philosophy and the philosopher, and the relationship of all three to religion. Most importantly,

however, the interpretation that I suggest will look at how will to power can be understood as a "*vindication* of God."

Nietzsche tells us in *Ecce Homo* that *Beyond Good and Evil*

> is in all essentials a *critique of modernity*, not excluding the modern sciences, modern arts, and even modern politics, along with pointers to a contrary type that is as little modern as possible—a noble, Yes-saying type. In the latter sense, the book is a school for the *gentilhomme* [nobleman, gentleman], taking this concept in a more spiritual and radical sense than has ever been done (*EH* "Books," *BGE* 2).

The constructive task of *Beyond Good and Evil* is thus to cultivate new philosophers (the philosophers of the future), and the fundamental teaching Nietzsche outlines in that work is *will to power*. Before looking at the doctrine of will to power itself, however, there is an important ambiguity to note in the genitive "of the future." As Young points out, the phrase "philosophers of the future" 'can mean either "philosophers who—literally—inhabit the future" (a "subjective" genitive) or "philosophers who philosophize *towards* the future" (an "objective" genitive)' (Young 128). The new philosophers Nietzsche is attempting to (or 'tempting' [*BGE* 42]) to cultivate fall largely in the former category: they will be the "*commanders and legislators*" of our future truths and values. It is important to note, however, that in *Zarathustra*, for example, Nietzsche talks about his disciples as being the ones *from whom* 'a chosen people shall grow—and from them the overman' (*Z* "On the Bestowing Virtue," 2). In this sense, the philosophers of the future whom Nietzsche intends (is hoping) to cultivate will be much like himself to the extent that they philosophize about (or *towards*) the future in the "objective" sense of the genitive.

Interestingly, however, Young also points out a sense in which both Nietzsche and his disciples 'metaphorically' inhabit the future (Young 128). Nietzsche notes in *Beyond Good and Evil* § 212, for instance, that

> the philosopher, being *necessarily* a person of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, has, in every age, been and has needed to be at odds with his today: his enemy has always been the ideal of today. So far, all these extraordinary patrons of humanity who are called philosophers (and who have seldom felt like friends of wisdom, but like disagreeable fools and dangerous question-marks instead—) have found that their task, their harsh, unwanted, undeniable task (though in the end, the *greatness* of their task) lay in being the bad conscience of their age (*BGE* 212).

That is to say that because they do not *literally* inhibit the future but are nevertheless out of step with their own age (like Achilleus, and Nietzsche himself, they are "Untimely Ones" [cf. *Iliad* XXIV, 540]) and write for "future" readers, these philosophers of the future in the "objective" sense of the genitive nonetheless inhabit the future in a "subjective" sense, but only metaphorically. Nietzsche, for example, enigmatically suggests that 'some are born posthumously' (*A* Forward; *EH* "Books," 1), adding that 'the time for me hasn't come yet' (*EH* "Books," 1). While it is certainly true that Nietzsche was a philosopher of the future in the "objective" sense—that is, as philosophizing *towards* the future, about what must or might be—Nietzsche is also relevant to our present in the sense that his philosophy heralds a future, a new and higher history than all history hitherto. In other words, the spirit of Nietzsche's philosophy does inhabit the modern world and so Nietzsche himself in a sense inhabits the modern world, making him metaphorically a philosopher of the future in the "subjective" sense of the genitive (this is, after all, a thesis about the significance of Nietzsche's positive religious teaching for the modern world). I shall have more to say about these future philosophers throughout the remainder of this thesis, but for now the important point to emphasize is that the *constructive* task of Nietzsche's critique of modernity is the cultivation of these new philosophers whose vocation will be to create our future truths and values.

As I mentioned above, it is not my intention to provide a step-by-step exegesis of Nietzsche's arguments to establish will to power as the fundamental fact[35] of the world. Nevertheless, since will to power is the central framework within which Nietzsche (and so too the philosophers of the future) will be operating, it will be important to provide at least a brief summary of the thrust of the arguments. For brevity, I shall focus mainly on Nietzsche's presentation of philosophy and physics—the former because it is the most central for Nietzsche's teaching and the latter because it neatly captures Nietzsche's thinking about the modern scientific project more generally—as expressions of will to power.

The first part of *Beyond Good and Evil* is entitled "On the Prejudices of the Philosophers." As this title suggests, the purpose of this first part is to disabuse the future philosophers of some of the many prejudices philosophers have held hitherto: such as the faith in opposites (*BGE* 2); that truth is worth more than falsity or untruth (*BGE* 4, 34); synthetic *a priori* judgments (*BGE* 11); the concept of a *causa sui* (*BGE* 15); self-certainty (Descartes' *cogito*, e.g.) (*BGE* 16); and freedom of the will (*BGE* 19-22), to cite the most salient examples. It is vital to note, however, that although Nietzsche suggests that all of these prejudices have been merely 'foreground appraisals' and 'provisional perspectives' (*BGE* 2) and that they are, each and every one of them, actually *false*, he does 'not consider the falsity of a judgment as itself an objection to a judgment' (*BGE* 4). Rather, Nietzsche's view is that the central criteria

[35] As will be made clearer below, Nietzsche thinks that will to power is the fundamental fact about the world, but it is crucial to note that will to power is only a fundamental fact understood within the context of Nietzsche's *life-affirming* interpretation of the world. In other words, Nietzsche is not appealing to some fact "out there" independent of or outside interpretation. Rather, will to power is the fundamental fact about the world for us insofar as perspectivism 'is the fundamental condition of all life' (*BGE* Preface).

for arbitration between judgments is 'how far the judgment promotes and preserves life, how well it preserves, and perhaps even cultivates life' (*BGE* 4). On the one hand, as we have seen in previous chapters, Nietzsche's opposition to Platonic metaphysics, for instance, is that it in fact *negates* life, and does not promote, preserve, or cultivate life.[36] On the other hand, however, we shall see below that this objection does not amount to a *refutation* of Platonism.

For Nietzsche, will to power is a *psychological interpretation* of the world (as noted above, psychological in an archaic original sense of a genuine *logos* of the soul, not in the modern sense of a science of mental processes and behaviour) that both reclaims *perspective*—"the fundamental condition of all life" denied by the old philosophy which simply assumed that it was possible to not only reveal "truth" in terms of a timeless, unchanging, disinterested view from nowhere, but also that "truth" was *Good* in itself[37]—and is consistent with the advances of our most sophisticated sciences. Concerning the latter, Nietzsche argues that 'now it is beginning to dawn on maybe five or six brains that physics too is only an interpretation of the world (according to ourselves! if I may say so[38]) and *not* an explanation of the world' (*BGE* 14). However, Nietzsche adds, insofar as modern physics 'is based on belief in the senses, it is regarded as more, and for a long time to come must be regarded as more—namely as explanation' (*BGE* 14). With 'eyes and fingers' (*BGE* 14) speaking in its favour, modern physics believes that nothing can be explained that cannot be seen or

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[36] Important to note, however, is that there is a sense in which Platonism *does* preserve life, but it preserves one specific kind of life at the expense of all others: namely, one guided and informed by the idea of the Good as such.

[37] In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche remarks that contemplation without interest is '*a non-concept and an absurdity*' (my emphasis) and one must possess the 'ability to engage and disengage our "pros" and "cons": we can use the *difference* in perspectives and affective interpretations for knowledge' (*GM* III, 12).

[38] According to "ourselves," of course, implicates *our* perspective of the world.

felt. In other words, physics, like all philosophy hitherto, has come to believe in itself and as such creates the world in *its* image (*BGE* 9). Here, interestingly enough, Nietzsche juxtaposes the Platonic way of thinking with physics. This contrast between physics and Platonism is offered, in part, to support the suggestion that "physics too is only an interpretation." Nietzsche argues that attraction of the 'noble' (*BGE* 14) Platonic way of thinking was precisely its opposition and resistance to obvious sense-evidence. That is, Platonic metaphysics offers a way of understanding the world independent of our everyday sense-experience. That Platonism offered an explanation of the world by resisting 'the rabble of the senses' (*BGE* 14) and physics purports to do just the opposite, however, seems to reveal that both Platonism and Sensualism are not in themselves a world *explanation* (or at least not the *only* world explanation), but each is merely an *interpretation* of the world. This is because both can be understood independently as offering coherent "explanations" of the world, but taken together they are profoundly at odds with one another: both cannot be right at the same time—since the one claims to have no business where we cannot see or feel and the other purports to remove itself from any sensual context whatever (although the coherent explanations must also be in their way comprehensive, i.e., Sensualism must be able to give a "sensible" account of non-sensible experience, and *vice versa* with Platonism)—but both seemingly have equal claim to the legitimacy of their own "explanation" of the world. So physics, too, is a spiritual will to power tyrannizing the world in its own image; having come to believe in itself it could do no other.

It is important to notice, however, that although he acknowledges that both Sensualism and Platonism are noble interpretations of the world, Nietzsche does

favour Sensualism in order to 'study physiology with a clear conscience' (*BGE* 15). That is to say that in reclaiming perspective, Nietzsche inverts the Platonic imperative to resist the rabble of the senses with the physicists' imperative: 'Where man has nothing more to see and grasp, he has nothing more to do' (*BGE* 14). It is key to note, however, is that this does not imply that Nietzsche is a materialist: 'As far materialistic atomism goes: this is one of the most well-refuted things in existence. In Europe these days, nobody in the scholarly community is likely to be so unscholarly as to attach any real significance to it, except as a handy household tool (that is, as an abbreviated figure of speech)' (*BGE* 12). Simply, materialistic atomism is a useful means for discussion and interpretation of phenomena, but is by no means a valid *explanation* of phenomena. Here, Nietzsche appeals to Copernicus, who 'convinced us to believe, contrary to all our senses, that the earth does not stand still,' and Boscovich, who 'taught us to renounce belief in the last bit of the earth that did "stand still," the belief in "matter," in the "material," in the residual piece of earth and clump of an atom: it was the greatest triumph over the senses that the world has ever known' (*BGE* 12). Lampert suggests that Nietzsche appeals to Copernicus and Boscovich as 'revolutionary modern thinkers' because both 'refused the evidence of the senses, and neither used that refusal to invent a "real" world' (Lampert 41). Although in that respect both Copernicus and Boscovich seem to be at odds with Nietzsche's new imperative quoted above (*viz.*, where we cannot see and feel we have no business), invoking these two revolutionary thinkers helps to support Nietzsche's case: there are many ways of interpreting the world. In other words, like Plato, both Copernicus and Boscovich resist the obviousness of sense-evidence as a criterion for a world

explanation, but, unlike Plato and the dogmatists, and more to the point, both reject the notion of a "true" world hiding behind the "apparent" world of sensory experience. Nietzsche thus favours these two thinkers over dogmatic thinkers, for instance, precisely because their interpretation of the world is more appropriate to our situation in the world here and now. To put it another way, both Copernicus and Boscovich represent for Nietzsche the beginnings of the modern scientific project that operates under the idea that things are a matter of forces and knowledge a matter of our calculative power over these forces of nature. So not only do thinkers such as Copernicus and Boscovich provide ways of thinking about the world that suggest that "maybe" Platonism got it wrong, and so perhaps there is more than one way of interpreting the world, but Nietzsche also favours these thinkers precisely because their interpretation of the world is more appropriate to the effective reality of the world here and now (i.e., the world informed and guided by the modern scientific project). More to the point, as a post-Baconian Nietzsche favours the views of Copernicus and Boscovich precisely because they *do* grant us instrumental power over the world.

But, again, physics too is only an *interpretation* of the world and not an explanation. Nietzsche expands on this point in *Beyond Good and Evil* § 22. As an old philologist 'who cannot help maliciously putting his finger on bad tricks of interpretation,' Nietzsche challenges the physicists on their tenet of the 'conformity of nature to law' (*BGE* 22). Nietzsche poses a hypothetical objection to the physicists, which I shall here quote at length:

> somebody with an opposite intention and mode of interpretation could come along and be able to read from the same nature, and with reference to the same set of appearances, a tyrannical ruthless and pitiless execution of power claims. This sort of

> interpreter would show the unequivocal and unconditional nature of all "will to power" so vividly and graphically that almost every word, and even the word "tyranny," would ultimately seem useless or like weakening and mollifying metaphors—and too humanizing. Yet this interpreter might nevertheless end up claiming the same thing about this world as you, namely that it follows a "necessary" and "calculable" course, although *not* because laws are dominant in it, but rather because laws are totally *absent*, and every power draws its final consequences at every moment. Granted, this is only an interpretation too—and you will be eager enough to make this objection?—well then, so much the better' (*BGE* 22).

The "somebody," of course, is Nietzsche himself. The objection being put to the physicists is *hypothetical* in the sense that Nietzsche is not—and indeed *cannot* be, since he is no longer working within a dogmatic two-world dichotomy—suggesting that will to power is the one "true" explanation of the world. Rather, will to power is and must always itself remain *interpretation*. But this is precisely what is at issue. How we understand the world depends on which lens, so to speak, through which we are examining the world, and all such lenses have their ulterior motives other than the pure will to truth in itself. It is, after all, the same "nature" being examined by the various competing sciences and philosophies, all of which purport to offer a "true" explanation of the world. That these explanations can be internally consistent but collectively inconsistent with one another in part reveals that *perhaps* there is no *one* true explanation available to us. That Platonism, for example, is false, is not an objection to it or a refutation of it; 'What business is it of mine to refute!—but as befits a positive mind, to replace the improbable with the more probable and in some circumstances to replace one error with another' (*GM* Preface, 4). Like philosophy, the sciences, as it were, "set up" or, to borrow Heidegger's terminology, "enframe" the world in advance of its inquiry. In this circumstance, what counts as "true" is what corresponds to the philosophical or scientific framework always already in place. Quite simply, philosophy and science *falsify* the world by painting surfaces over the

world, and it is through these surfaces that we are able to understand the world. Without these falsifications, Nietzsche thinks, 'people could not live' (*BGE* 4). That is, as beings spatially and temporally situated in the world we cannot but interpret the world and impose order on it according to those interpretations: 'life could not exist except on the basis of perspectival valuations and appearances' (*BGE* 34). Thus, it is not that Nietzsche objects to Platonism in the sense that it is a false interpretation of the world (it can, after all, do no other). Rather, the objection is to Platonism's claim to authority as the *one* "true" explanation of the world and, as we have seen above, to Platonism's hostility toward life.

Nietzsche's claim that the world as it is "given" to us is *mere* illusion in the sense that both philosophy and the sciences cannot but falsify the world, however, might suggest that there is, after all, a "true world" to be revealed. However, we should remember that will to power is not to be understood as "truth" in terms of a two-world dichotomy. On the contrary, as beings spatially and temporally situated in the world we cannot but interpret the world and impose order on it according to those interpretations. As Jan-Olav Henricksen puts this point: 'we schematize the world with our concepts and words. The world does not exist without such schemas, but how we schematize depends on our will to power – what we want the world to be' (Henricksen 140). There is a sense in which will to power provides us form without content. That is, Nietzsche's concern is what is true *for us* and what is true for us is a matter of how we set up and interpret the world. What *is* true, on Nietzsche's view, is precisely that we schematize the world according to our will to power, we can do no other. Because we cannot step outside ourselves in order to discern "the truth" about the world,

Nietzsche is not concerned what is true in and of itself. Indeed, as he remarks at *Will to Power* § 625, for instance, Nietzsche thinks that 'the concept "truth" is nonsensical. The entire domain of "true-false" applies only to relations, not to an "in-itself"' (*WP* 625). As Henricksen observes, 'we cannot determine anything independent of, or "outside," such perspectives. The human being cannot raise herself above her own position and take a look at the world as it is *sub specie aeternetatis*, even though religion [and dogmatic philosophy] creates and sustains the illusion that this is possible' (Henricksen 143). Each interpretation wants to create the world in its own image: once Platonism comes to believe in itself, for instance, it creates the world in its image, it cannot do otherwise—so too with physics, for example. What remains consistent, for Nietzsche, is the form, i.e., that we schematize the world according to our will to power—though, ironically, in the case of Platonism that will to power can be life-denying. The content of will to power, however, will always be a matter of a particular expression or interpretation of our will to power. While Nietzsche will have to justify his criteria for choosing among interpretations—which, as noted above, for Nietzsche is "how far the judgment promotes and preserves life, how well it preserves, and perhaps even cultivates"—will to power already has the advantage over Platonism, for instance, precisely because it is an interpretation of the world that accounts for there being multiple interpretations of the world.

Strictly speaking, however, will to power is not simply a matter of form without content. Will to power, Nietzsche thinks, is the fundamental fact about the world precisely because, as I have been suggesting, we interpret the world from our own perspective, and perspective is a condition of life. Will to power constitutes, so to

speak, a ***Weltsinterpretationslehre***, an account of what makes possible all interpretation. Because we cannot transcend our situatedness within the world in order to know the world as it is in itself, we need a theory that can offer a comprehensive interpretation of the world that is not only faithful to this world (faithful not in the sense of describing or explaining it as it is in itself but faithful as *life-affirming*), the only world to which we have access, but that also accounts for the multitude of interpretations offered by the various philosophies and sciences hitherto. Will to power purports to do just this in the sense that will to power is not just an interpretation but a doctrine of interpretation. On Nietzsche's view, it is *will to power* that is common to everything that is: Will to power explains species-survival insofar as it is the strongest *will* that survives (BGE 21); all of our drives are understandable as expressions of will to power—they all do philosophy in their attempt at *mastery* and *supremacy* (BGE 6) and, after all, '"Will" can naturally have effects only on "will"—and not on "matter" (not on "nerves" for instance—)' (*BGE* 36);[39] and philosophy itself, as the most spiritual will to power, creates the world in *its* image, it can do no other (*BGE* 9). In this latter sense, will to power thus accounts for competing philosophical views all claiming to be "true" in the former sense of "truth." That is, when a stronger incarnation of the most spiritual will to power comes to dominate it creates the world in *its* image, thereby replacing the weaker expression (moreover, any future philosophical or scientific account, whether "invented" or "discovered" (*BGE* 12, e.g.), will similarly affirm will to power). The theories of the sciences of life and nature, too, change, and it is understanding them as expressions of will to power that

[39] Notice that Nietzsche here employs common sense in by-passing some of the more problematic metaphysical dualisms that have plagued dogmatic metaphysics, such as the mind/body problem, for instance.

accounts for these changing theories, theories that are incompatible with each other, but independently have been "true" *for us* and have each at some point been successful in explaining what is.

Nietzsche's anticipated objection that will to power is itself only interpretation, which the physicists will be "all too eager to make," is welcomed precisely because it concedes his point. That is, there *are* different perspectives from which to interpret and evaluate the world, no *one* perspective having the sole privilege of being "true."[40] For Nietzsche, what is "true," truth being understood in the Platonic sense of "true" in opposition to "false," is precisely beside the point: 'Isn't it enough to assume that there are levels of appearance and, as it were, lighter and darker shades and tones of appearance—different *valeurs* [values], to use the language of the painters?' (*BGE* 34). In other words, Nietzsche is not concerned with what is "eternally true," but rather with what is true *for us* as interpreters situated in the world here and now. And what is true for us is that we have different perspectives from which to evaluate the world.

It should be clear that will to power is not, *contra* Lampert (Lampert 2001, 20, e.g.), meant to as a comprehensive *ontology* about the way the world is in itself. However, will to power is nonetheless "true," *in a manner of speaking*. That is, will to power is "true" inasmuch as what has happened before has happened even now: '*the text has finally disappeared under the interpretation*' (*BGE* 38). That is to say that Nietzsche's philosophy is just like every other philosophy hitherto: once it comes to believe in itself, it will create the world in *its* own image—it can do no other.

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[40] Indeed, as Nietzsche notes in *Beyond Good and Evil* 25, 'no philosopher so far has *ever* been proved right' (*BGE* 25).

Moreover, the philosophers of the future will love their "truth" much like 'all philosophers so far have loved their truths. But they certainly will not be dogmatists. It would offend their pride, as well as their taste, if their truth were a truth for everyone' (*BGE* 43). Because there is no timeless, unchanging, disinterested "truth" that is available to us, there can be no "truth" for everyman. It is important to notice, however, that this is not a reduction to relativism: relativism as such operates on the dogmatic assumption of a two-world dichotomy, which has been clearly rejected on the Nietzschean picture. Were Nietzsche to claim that there is *no* "truth," we would indeed be left within the spectre of relativism. However, the question for Nietzsche is "what matters truth?" It is interesting to notice, then, that what might seem like a problem of reflexivity for Nietzsche—if will to power is only an interpretation of the world then it is subject to its own criticisms: i.e., how can will to power claim to be "true" if there is *only* interpretation?—not only fails to get off the ground, but also actually serves to strengthen Nietzsche's claim that the world is will to power and nothing else. Why? Precisely because it is a philosophy that recognizes itself as an expression of will to power, a philosophy that is no longer concerned with, and so limited by, a timeless, unchanging, disinterested view from nowhere. Rather, the world viewed as will to power is an *interpretation* of the world, one that accounts for (an ever-changing) perspective. In other words, will to power is the fundamental fact about the world precisely because we cannot but enframe the world with various scientific and philosophical constructs and there is no content to the world that can be understood independently of these representations. To affirm will to power is simply to affirm that there are various representations with which we set up and enframe the

world. We cannot but continue to use these representations, but under the guise of will to power they are used with the understanding that they are only "foreground estimates" and "preliminary perspectives." The reflexive issues, then, are precisely beside the point because, as we have seen, Nietzsche is working with a radically new conception of "truth." What I want to focus on now, however, is how Nietzsche intends will to power to be understood as a psychological interpretation of the world and how the future philosophers employ will to power religiously.

In *Beyond Good and Evil* § 23 Nietzsche claims the right to demand 'that psychology again be recognized as queen of the sciences, and that the rest of the sciences[41] exist to serve and prepare for it. This is because Nietzsche thinks that, from now on, psychology is again the path to the fundamental problems' (*BGE* 23). [42] One way to think about will to power is as a sort of psychological framework with which we can appropriate past and create new evaluations. As Nehamas describes it, will to power is 'the ability to use the materials that already exist in the world in a new and different way' (Nehamas 2000, 137-8). Nietzsche concludes his thought experiment intended to establish will to power as the most comprehensive interpretation of the world by noting that 'The world *seen from the inside*, the world determined and described with respect to its "intelligible character"—would be just this "will to power" and nothing else.—' (*BGE* 36, my emphasis). The "intelligible character" of the world, it should be clear, just is the world as it is "intelligible" for us. Unlike the

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[41] As Norman points out in a footnote to her translation, although *Wissenschaft* is generally translated as "science," the German more broadly captures the humanities as well as the natural and social sciences.
[42] Like Kant, the fundamental problems for Nietzsche are God, freedom, and immortality. This suggestion may at first strike the reader as untenable in light of the usual readings of Nietzsche. However, as we shall see throughout the remainder of this thesis, I do think that these are the central issues for Nietzsche, albeit understood differently than they have been understood so far.

traditional philosophical project which was guided by the idea that things have essences and that such essences could be known through rational deliberation, for instance, will to power is a psychological interpretation of the world in the sense that the question being asked no longer concerns essences but focuses rather on our dispositions to the world in the first place. In other words, Nietzsche is first and foremost concerned with what accounts not only for what we have taken to be true, but also for how our notions of truth itself transform throughout history and why it is that we are disposed to a particular notion(s) of truth.

So, as I have been claiming, Platonism, for instance, although false, is not thus refuted. Rather, Platonism is to be overcome in the sense that the new philosophers recognize that Platonism is no longer the guiding metaphysical and epistemological framework for the contemporary world. Importantly, however, Platonism is to be appropriated by the new philosophers in their task of creating new truths and values.[43] Moreover, the search after truth as carried out by the traditional philosophical project is not refuted either. Indeed, as Nietzsche makes clear in *Beyond Good and Evil* § 211, the search after truth as conceived by the traditional philosophical project *remains* a *noble* endeavour:

> The project for philosophical labourers on the noble model of Kant and Hegel is to establish some large class of given values (which is to say: values that were once *posited* and created but have come to dominate and have been called "truths" for a

[43] In the introduction to his translation of *The Birth of Tragedy*, for example, Kaufmann discusses Nietzsche's own appropriation of Socrates: 'The "artistic Socrates" is Nietzsche himself. He looks forward to a philosophy that admits the tragic aspect of life, as the Greek poets did, but does not sacrifice the critical intellect; a philosophy that denies Socrates' optimistic faith that knowledge and virtue and happiness are, as it were, Siamese triplets; a philosophy as sharply critical as Socrates' but able and willing to avail itself of the visions and resources of art' (Kaufmann 12). Recall from above that Nietzsche does think Socrates a worthy advocate, an *equal*. There are elements of Socratic thinking that Nietzsche himself employs, not the least of which is Socratic irony; but there are also aspects of Socratic thinking that Nietzsche rejects with profound disgust: such as Socrates' own disgust with life, for instance.

> long time) and press it into formulas... It is up to these researchers to make everything that has happened or been valued so far look clear, obvious, comprehensible, and manageable ... '*But true philosophers are commanders and legislators*: they say "That is how it *should* be!" they are the ones who first determine the "where to?" and "what for?" of people, which puts at their disposal the preliminary labour of all philosophical labourers, all those who overwhelm the past. True philosophers reach for the future with a creative hand and everything that is and was becomes a means, a tool, a hammer for them. Their "knowing" is *creating*, their creating is a legislating, their will to truth is—*will to power* (*BGE* 211).

In other words, philosophical labourers like Kant and Hegel (and Plato) carry out the noble task of making clear what has been valued hitherto, even though they themselves have perhaps taken these formulations for the "truth" itself. The genuine philosophers, however, make use of this *preliminary* labour to create new truths and values for the future of humanity.

The central task of the new philosophers is to understand the psychological implications of will to power for religion and to employ these religious experiences in new and different ways. Nietzsche opens Part III of *Beyond Good and Evil*, the part on the religious being, with the following remarks: 'The human soul and its limits, the scope of human inner experience to date, the heights, depths, and range of these experiences, the entire history of the soul *so far* and its still unexhausted possibilities: these are the predestined hunting grounds for a born psychologist and lover of the "great hunt" (*BGE* 45). The "scope of human inner experience to date" and its "still unexhausted possibilities" refers to the psychological study of will to power as it is most readily available to us: the heights, depths, and range of our *inner* experiences *so far*. Not only is this the "predestined hunting ground" for the "born psychologist," but it is also the natural *training ground* for the new philosophers being groomed by Nietzsche. Commenting that 'he wishes he had a few hundred hunting aides and well-trained bloodhounds he could drive into the history of the human soul to round up *his*

game,' Nietzsche laments about 'how hard it is to find hounds and helpers' (*BGE* 45). Nietzsche mentions two reasons for this difficulty. First, scholars 'stop being useful the very moment the "*great* hunt" (but also the great danger) begins:—this is just when they lose their sharp eye and keen nose' (*BGE* 45). In light of my discussion above, I take this to mean that it is because academic philosophy has been 'reduced' (*BGE* 204) to the epistemological handmaiden of the modern sciences and that scholars want accordingly to order and force all of our experiences into established formulas (*BGE* 45) that they are of no use for hunting Nietzsche's game. Second, in the hands of the *homines religiosi*, philosophical thinking has largely been a handmaiden to religious faith (*BGE* 45, 46). Thus, the *homines religiosi* also lose their "sharp eye and keen nose" precisely because they too stop at the surface. It is precisely the new philosophers, however, whom Nietzsche hopes will be strong enough, hard enough, and artist enough to peer beneath the surfaces of the scope of human inner experiences so far and tap into and exploit its yet unexhausted possibilities.

I have already discussed in previous chapters how it is that, on Nietzsche's view, we created the *other-worldly*. Moreover, I suggested in Chapter Two that it was principally *fear* that led people to bow down before the saint. Nietzsche's discussion in *Beyond Good and Evil* § 51, however, adds a new dimension to how will to power has hitherto been understood—or, better, *mis*understood—religiously. Asking why even the most powerful people have bowed before the saint, Nietzsche suggests that it was because

> They sensed a superior force in the saint and, as it were, behind the question-mark of his frail and pathetic appearance, a force that wants to test itself through this sort of conquest. They sensed a strength of will in which they could recognize and honour their own strength and pleasure in domination. When they honoured the saint, they honoured something in themselves. Furthermore, the sight of the saint made them

> suspicious: "No one would desire such a monstrosity of negation, of anti-nature, for nothing," they said to (and asked of) themselves. "Perhaps there is a reason for it, perhaps the ascetic has inside information about some very great danger, thanks to his secret counsellors and visitors?" Enough; in front of the saint, the powerful of the world learned a new fear, they sensed a new power, an alien, still unconquered enemy:—it was the "will to power" that made them stop in front of the saint. They had to ask him— — (*BGE* 51).

That is to say that it was precisely because they lacked a psychology of their own will to power that the most powerful people have fallen slavishly into belief in the *other-worldly* (cf. Lampert 2001, 110). The psychology of will to power, then, is not restricted to human agency or intentionality (although how we ourselves understand and employ will to power will most certainly require intentionality). That is, as I have been suggesting, once a philosophy comes to believe in itself it will create the world in its own image—it can do no other. Belief in the *other-worldly*, for instance, is no different. Unable to accept that such a "monstrous" negation of the will would be desired for *nothing*, and lacking a psychology of will to power, even the most powerful people themselves were victim to a superior expression of will to power: they fell pitifully to their knees before the saint because they *had to*. That they lacked a proper psychology of will to power is what, on Nietzsche's view, explains how people as rationally acute as a Pascal, for instance, continued to fall victim to Christian spirituality, for example: 'a gruesome appearance of a protracted suicide of reason' (*BGE* 46). In other words, because they lacked a proper psychological understanding of will to power and belief in the *other-worldly* reigned supreme, the most powerful people continued to make the 'supreme sacrifice of the mind for reasons of the heart' (Lampert 2001, 103). Armed with a proper psychology of will to power, however, Nietzsche not only inverts this sacrifice, but also offers a "*vindication* of God."

In his sketch, "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*," Strauss suggests that 'The doctrine of the will to power—the whole doctrine of *Beyond Good and Evil*—is in a manner a *vindication of God*" (Strauss 192, my emphasis). There are several clues in *Beyond Good and Evil* that support this suggestion, two of which I shall mention in this chapter, and a third which I will discuss in conjunction with eternal return in the next.[44] First, Nietzsche follows up his hypothetical experiment to privilege will to power as the most comprehensive interpretation of the world with the following short aphorism: '"What? Doesn't that mean, to use a popular idiom: God is refuted but the devil is not—?" On the contrary! On the contrary, my friends! And [to hell with whomever[45]] is forcing you to use popular idioms!—' (*BGE* 37). Recall that Nietzsche has rejected the dogmatic two-world dichotomy. That is, Nietzsche has not simply rejected the "true-world" in favour of the "apparent-world," but has reconfigured the very way in which the problem is set up in the first place. Thus, the traditional opposition of God versus the devil is here misplaced. However, there is a sense in which the dichotomy is still in play for Nietzsche. But, speaking to his "friends," the new philosophers being educated in the

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[44] There are, of course, many other clues in *Beyond Good and Evil*, no to mention throughout Nietzsche's corpus as a whole, that support the suggestion that what Nietzsche is offering is a vindication of God. My choice of these examples specifically is their relation to Nietzsche's discussion of will to power and religion.

[45] The original German here reads: '*Und, zum Teufel auch, wer zwingt euch, popular zu reden!*' (*JGB* 37). Judith Norman's translation has 'And who the devil is forcing you to use popular idioms!' (*BGE* 37); Kaufmann has 'And, the devil—who forces you to speak with the vulgar?' (*BGE* 1992, 37); and Hollingdale has 'And who the devil compels you to speak vulgarly!' (*BGE* 1972, 37). However, "*zum Teufel auch*" is an idiomatic expression that carries the sense of "for fuck's sake" or, more formally, "for heaven's sake" (or "for hell's sake"). I take it Nietzsche uses this idiomatic expression (rather than another used for swearing) because the word "*Teufel*" in it yields a nice word play with the mentioning of the devil '*Teufel*' (JGB 37) at the beginning of the aphorism. At any rate, the point is that Nietzsche is expressing his disgust and impatience with those who remain seduced by the old way of thinking (and old language) and so the sense of the passage itself is more forceful than the rhetorical question it is usually translated as. Thanks to both Robert Burch for calling to my attention the difficulty with the translation of this passage and to Ingo Brigandt for his helpful insights into the idiomatic nature Nietzsche's German in the sentence in question.

psychology of will to power, Nietzsche retains the dichotomy for instructional purposes only. That is to say that it is not, strictly speaking, that God is refuted and the devil is elevated to the status of a god. On the contrary, it was, in a sense, the devil that forced us into the "popular idioms" that devalued the world and everything worldly for the sake of some *other-worldly* illusion. But, as we have seen, "God is dead," for Nietzsche, signifies a reconfiguration of how the traditional philosophical project is understood, and is thus not simply a reversal of the two-world dichotomy this project has traditionally set up. So the opposition between God and the devil here is itself not to be understood under the guise of the two-world dichotomy of good *versus* evil. Rather, God and the devil are, in effect, both part of the *same* world, it was just that God wanted to convince us that that world and everything in it was of no real value and, moreover, that the temptation to *anything* worldly was the work of the devil.

Second, Nietzsche's discussion of the 'great ladder of religious cruelty' in *Beyond Good and Evil* § 55 also hints at a vindication of God. There, Nietzsche lists what he takes to be the three most important rungs on this ladder:

> People used to make human sacrifices to their god, perhaps even sacrificing those they loved the best—this sort of phenomenon can be found in the sacrifice of the firstborn … Then, during the moral epoch of humanity, people sacrificed the strongest instincts they had, their "nature," to their god; the joy of *this* particular festival shines in the cruel eyes of the ascetic, that enthusiastic piece of "anti-nature." Finally: what was left to be sacrificed? In the end, didn't people have to sacrifice all comfort and hope, everything holy or healing, all faith in a hidden harmony or a future filled with justice and bliss? Didn't people have to sacrifice God himself and worship rocks, stupidity, gravity, fate, or nothingness out of sheer cruelty to themselves? To sacrifice God for nothingness—that paradoxical mystery of the final cruelty has been reserved for the race that is now approaching: by now we all know something of this.— (*BGE* 55).

The first rung on the ladder of religious cruelty, the sacrificing of human beings to the gods, can be read as a direct reference to the story of Abraham in Genesis 22. Testing Abraham's faith, God commands the unethical of Abraham: the ultimate sacrifice of

his only son, Isaac. The second rung has already been discussed at length throughout this thesis: Namely, the sacrifice of any value in a *this-worldly* existence, a saying *No*! to life in favour of some transcendent, *other-worldly* ideal. As Lampert puts this point, it is 'the moral sacrifice of "one's instincts, one's 'nature'" to antinatural, supernatural gods' (Lampert 2001, 115). The final rung on the great ladder of religious cruelty, however, is precisely the predicament of the contemporary world. As was discussed in detail in Chapter One above, God is dead and the contemporary world finds itself in a state of nihilism, having renounced the very God to which all other religious sacrifices have been made. But this is the nihilism of the last man—the most contemptuous and 'the most harmful type of man because they prevail at the expense of *truth* and at the expense of the *future*' (*EH* "Destiny," 4)—and while this is, as we saw in Chapter One, the effective reality of the contemporary world as Nietzsche sees it, this sacrifice of God for nothingness is yet to be properly understood: it is the "paradoxical mystery reserved for the race that is now approaching," the genuine philosophers who are the arbiters of new truths and values. The sacrifice has already been made, and it is the greatest form of religious cruelty thus far in the sense that in sacrificing God, we also sacrifice all the promise of comfort and hope that belief in this God entailed—it was the greatest religious sacrifice so far, and it was made for nothing in the sense that the modern world, on Nietzsche's view, is bereft of values and ideals to structure our practical lives. But, for Nietzsche, this religious sacrifice of God for nothingness in the hands of the new philosophers represents the beginnings of a new *transformation*. As Strauss points out, 'Nietzsche does not mean to sacrifice God for the sake of the Nothing, for while recognizing the deadly truth that God died he aims at transforming

it into a life-inspiring one or rather to discover in the depth of the deadly truth its opposite' (Strauss 194). These new philosophers will adopt an imperative different from the one employed by the *homines religiosi* hitherto. Specifically, rather than sacrificing the mind for reasons of the heart, like a Pascal, for instance, these new philosophers approach religion with the following (opposite) imperative: '*Bound heart, free spirit.*—If someone binds up his heart and takes it captive, he can give his spirit considerable freedom' (*BGE* 87). In a sense, faith no longer trumps reason, but rather reason rules faith—or, better, religion no longer will tyrannize philosophy, but philosophy must now rule, and indeed *re-create*, religion.[46] The riddle of eternal return, to which I now turn, represents Nietzsche's attempt at—or, better, 'temptation' (*BGE* 42) for—a new life-inspiring religious truth. As we shall see, with the rebirth of the philosopher god and god of the philosophers, Dionysus, this new life-inspiring religious truth, for Nietzsche, represents the *ultimate* vindication of god.

[46] As we shall see in the next chapter, however, there is a sense in which eternal return, and so Nietzschean religion, itself requires a form of faith.

Chapter Four

Eternal Return: Nietzschean Gratitude and Life-Affirmation

> Creating—that is the great redemption from suffering, and life's becoming light. But in order for the creator to be, suffering is needed and much transformation.
>
> Indeed, much bitter dying must be in your life, you creators! Therefore you are advocates and justifiers of all that is not everlasting.
>
> In order for the creator himself to be the child who is newly born, he must also want to be the birth-giver and the pain of giving birth (*Z* II, "On the Blessed Isles").

> The fundamental conception of [*Zarathustra* is] the idea of the eternal recurrence, this highest formula of affirmation that is at all possible (*EH* "Books," *Zarathustra* 1).

In this chapter I provide an interpretation of eternal return (or, as it is also called, the eternal recurrence of the same) as Nietzsche's new *life-affirming* religious truth. Broadly construed, eternal return is the view that one must effectively *will*, unconditionally, everything '*just as it was and is* through all eternity' (*BGE* 56). In other words, one must *affirm* life in all its contingency, all its greatness, and all its terrible brutality such that one could *will* to experience it again, *exactly as it was in every detail,* infinitely many times. Because, as we have seen, Nietzsche has transformed the traditional philosophical model, eternal return cannot be a timeless *truth* that is "out there" for us to discover by means of rational deliberation or religious revelation. Moreover, it is not clear that eternal return is even *thinkable* as a rational truth, and so there is a sense in which eternal return *cannot* be "true" at all. Interestingly, however, Nietzsche does talk about a 'proof of the doctrine' (*WP* 1057) and suggests further that 'the law of the conservation of energy demands *eternal recurrence*' (*WP* 1063). Kaufmann and Hollingdale note that the 1911 edition suggests that *The Will to Power* § 1057 'represents the plan for a book, *The Eternal*

Reccurrence' (*WP* fn 103). Of course, such a book was never written, perhaps because the need for such a proof was never seriously entertained by Nietzsche himself. The only talk of a "proof" in Nietzsche's published work is offered in Zarathustra's speech "On the Vision and the Riddle," basically in the form: "time is infinite; *ergo* eternal return" (*Z* III, "On the Vision and the Riddle," 2). Nevertheless, that this "proof" is so egregiously invalid, and offered in the context of the discussion addressed to those who would prefer to riddle and to guess rather than 'probe along a thread with cowardly hands' (*Z* III, "On the Vision and the Riddle," 1) draws attention to the issue of "proof" itself. So although nowhere in his published work does Nietzsche concern himself seriously with providing a "proof" for eternal return, a complete interpretation of eternal return will have to, at least in some way, account for the talk of a "proof" in the *Nachlaß*.

The short, and perhaps evasive, response to Nietzsche's talk of a "proof" for eternal return would be to explain it away as Nietzsche merely "working through" his thought, since, as I mentioned, this talk appears nowhere with any seriousness in his published work. If Nietzsche did intend his *Nachlaß* to be read, however, we might also wonder if his talk of a "proof" for eternal return is there intended to mislead or confuse us—another enigmatic mask, so to speak. But I want to make another suggestion, one that is more in line with the interpretation I shall be arguing for in this chapter. Specifically, Nietzsche's talk of a "proof" for eternal return is to be understood as a sort of Anselmian faith seeking understanding. In other words, willing eternal return makes eternal return true and any attempt to offer a rational account for eternal return is thus nothing more than attempting to understand what one's effective

reality always already is. The conception (*Conception* and not *Begriff* [concept]) of eternal return is the "highest formula of affirmation that is at all possible," i.e., as such an affirmation it is *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit*.[47] Nietzsche's talk of a proof for eternal return, I want to suggest, is no more than his trying to make sense of his reality as it *is* lived out. That the world is will to power just is Nietzsche's effective reality and willing eternal return is how Nietzsche expresses his own will to power. Nietzsche's *fides quaerens intellectum*, one might think, is thus an attempt to work out how his willing eternal return is consistent with his view that "the world is will to power and nothing else." A "proof" for eternal return, then, would be nothing more than Nietzsche attempting to understand how the two are reconciled with one and other.

There is one particular passage in *Ecce Homo* where I think Nietzsche makes it abundantly clear that he is not concerned with supplying "proof" for the "truth" of eternal return. In discussing the "type" Zarathustra, Nietzsche remarks: 'Precisely in this width of space and this accessibility for what is contradictory, Zarathustra experiences *himself* as the supreme type of all beings; and once one hears how he defines this, one will refrain from seeking any metaphor for it' (*EH* "Books," *Z* 6, my emphasis). The German for the last clause here reads: '*und wenn man hört, wie er diese definiert, so wird man darauf verzichten, nach seinem Gleichnis zu suchen*' (*EH* "BÜCHER," *ASZ* 6). Two things are crucial to notice. First, Zarathustra experiences *himself* as the "supreme type of all beings" by willing eternal return. The "*seinem*" here, then, refers directly to Zarathustra, and so should read "him" rather than

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[47] Cited from professor Robert Burch's lectures on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* given at the University of Alberta in the fall term of 2004.

Kaufmann's "it."[48] This is in fact how Judith Norman translates the passage: 'and when you hear how he defines this, you will stop looking for any similes or similarities to *him*' (*EH* 2005, "Books," *Z* 6, my emphasis). Notice too that Norman translates "*Gleichnis*" as "simile or similarities." This brings me to the second point. Specifically, once we "hear" that the Dionysian is how Zarathustra defines the "supreme type of all beings," we shall cease from seeking any metaphor or simile [*Gleichnis*] for this type (Zarathustra himself). In the German, "*Gleichnis*" usually refers to a parable, an allegory, or a simile, in particular the ones spoken by Jesus in the New Testament.[49] The metaphor or simile that is usually identified with Christ is God, which, in turn, is equated with the Good, and/or the True. So Nietzsche is here deliberately adopting religious language to make a different point. We cease seeking a metaphor or simile to define or describe this supreme type of all beings (Zarathustra) precisely because it is beside the point: what is at issue is no longer "Truth" as traditionally understood. Rather, what is true just is what is true for us, what we effectively will. Of course, his adoption of the term "Dionysian" and the re-emergence of Dionysus are themselves metaphors or similes for Nietzsche's highest form of affirmation and of god. What I take Nietzsche's point to be, however, is that we should cease seeking any metaphor or simile such as God, the Good, or the True for the supreme type of being. In short, one will refrain from seeking any "proof" that looks for and gives grounds to the "truth" of eternal return. Much more, of course, needs to be said to support this line of reasoning, and I do fully realize that this is

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[48] As an aside, it is interesting to point out that Kaufmann himself notes a difficulty with his translation: '*Nach seinem Gleichnis zu suchen*. This makes little sense; Nietzsche probably meant: *nach seinesgleichen zu suchen*, i.e.: seeking his equal' (Kaufmann 1992, 761).

[49] Thanks again to Ingo Brigandt for his invaluable assistance with the German.

perhaps quite an interpretive stretch. Nevertheless, I do think that Nietzsche's lack of concern for a "proof" in his published texts is quite telling, and central for my purposes here is the "psychological" and "religious" implications of eternal return for Nietzsche's thought.

These worries concerning the "truth" of eternal return notwithstanding, the fundamental fact of the human condition that is revealed to us in the wake of the death of God and the rejection of the two-world dichotomy (that we are the creators and arbiters of our ultimate truths and values) provides a clue to how might understand Nietzsche's teaching of eternal return. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche suggests that 'Perhaps the whole of *Zarathustra* [recalling that the fundamental conception of *Zarathustra* is eternal return] may be reckoned as music' (*EH* "Books," *Z* 1). In contradistinction with dialectical argumentation, music follows no logical necessity (in the sense of a necessity that could not be otherwise; music still has its "*Not-wendigkeit*" [necessity] that is not without a "logic"), yet presumably neither is it a "mishmash of a hundred varied paradoxes and heterodoxies." Rather, it must as music have a "lyric" or "musical" order, and it is the listener that gives music its structure and form. Music, Leslie Paul Thiele suggests, elicits a *psychological* response from the listener insofar as it 'is capable of arousing and unifying the feelings of pleasure and pain that capture man's existential plight' (Thiele 124).[50] But the artistic expression of music can only be meaningful to a listener if it transforms the way in which the she looks at and evaluates the world and herself by making its meaning her own—it is she, as an evaluator and creator, who determines its meaning. Thus understood, if eternal return

[50] 'Music allows the passions to enjoy themselves' (*BGE* 106).

is interpreted as music, it can itself only be meaningful to an individual insofar as it is appropriated, evaluated, and structured by said individual.

In Zarathustra's speech "On the Vision and the Riddle" eternal return is presented, as the title suggests, as a riddle:

> To you, bold searchers, researchers, and whoever put to terrible seas with cunning sails—
>
> to you, the riddle-drunk, the twilight-happy whose souls are lured by flutes to every maelstrom:
>
> —because you do not want to probe along a thread with cowardly hands; and because where you can *guess*, there you hate to *deduce*—
>
> to you alone I tell the riddle that I *saw*—the vision of the loneliest one.— (*Z* III, "On the Vision and the Riddle," 1).

As I have been suggesting, then, eternal return is something of an enigma which must be thought through and riddled out, as it were. But it is important to notice that the answer to the riddle must be thought through and guessed at by those who "hate to *deduce*." In presenting the riddle to the dwarf, the spirit of gravity,[51] Zarathustra suggests of eternal return: 'you do not know my abysmal [*abgründlichen*[52]] thought! *That*—you could not bear!' (*Z* III, "On the Vision and the Riddle," 2). In fact, the dwarf, the spirit of gravity who, educated in the art of reasoning from grounds alone, can *only* deduce, simply vanishes, unable to bear the abysmal thought (*Z* III, "On the Vision and the Riddle," 2). Rather, on Nietzsche's view, it is only those Odyssean sea-farers who, like Zarathustra, have seen 'many lands … and many people,' i.e., those

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[51] Kaufmann notes that the spirit of gravity is representative of 'the dead weight of convention' (Kaufmann 1982, 262), which Lampert then suggests is representative of 'Plato and Platonism for the people, our branches of the dogmatism that has until now mastered the world' (Lampert 1986, 198). For Nietzsche, recall, Christianity is this Platonism for the people (*BGE* preface).

[52] Eternal return is an abysmal [*ab-gründlich*] thought in three senses: it is a thought without grounds or reason; it is the heaviest burden: the sheer weight of the responsibility eternal return entails is more than most could bear; and eternal return is inscrutable [*abgründig*]. There is also a fourth sense in which eternal return is abysmal if in a Heideggerian sense one sees it as the groundless ground of all grounds, once willed. (Thanks again to Robert Burch for pointing out the nuances of Nietzsche's German lost in translation.)

who have wandered much and have learned many minds, are capable of riddling out the meaning of eternal return (*Z* I "On a Thousand and One Goals").

The abysmal existential burden entailed by the doctrine of eternal return is made explicit in *The Gay Science* where eternal return is directly presented as an existential challenge:

> *The heaviest weight.*—What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence...' Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.' If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you (*GS* 341).

Notice that the question of whether or not eternal return is "true" is here precisely beside the point. Young, for instance, here asks us to 'notice how completely irrelevant to the central role of the eternal recurrence in Nietzsche's thinking is the question of whether or not it is intended as a "cosmological" truth' (Young 176, fn. 12). Furthermore, Nehamas suggests that Nietzsche is no more interested in the *truth* of eternal return than he is concerned with whether or not eternal return is even a *plausible* or *credible* idea. 'What he is interested in,' Nehamas argues, 'is the *attitude* one must have toward oneself in order to react with joy and not despair to the possibility the demon raises, to the thought that one's life will occur, the very same in every single detail, again and again and again for all eternity' (Nehamas 1985, 151, my emphasis). For Nietzsche, eternal return is in this sense the "highest formula of affirmation that is at all possible" as it is the ultimate measure of *responsibility*. What it would mean to effectively will eternal return and affirm life in all of its tragic

horrors, however, can only be known and meaningful insofar as we ourselves appropriate eternal return and live it out. There can be no insight for us as to what willing eternal return would effectively mean for Nietzsche himself.

Concerning this last point, Magnus and Higgins, for example, note:

> During a particularly despairing moment, [Zarathustra] shudders at the implication of his doctrine that "the rabble," the petty people who comprise most of the human race, will also recur. The eagle and snake ... suggest their own formulation of eternal recurrence, which is perhaps one of the clearest suggestions of how eternal recurrence might give one a sense of meaning in life. And yet, it is not Zarathustra's words one reads (Magnus and Higgins 42).

That the animals offer an account of how eternal return might give a sense of meaning for one's life affirms that eternal return is something that one must evaluate and appropriate for oneself in order to be meaningful. It is thus not a bloodless metaphysical or cosmological position to be rationally *assented* to but a personal and existential imperative to be meaningfully *engaged* in. As Burch has pointed out, Kafka's "On Parables," which I shall here quote in its entirety, is helpful for teasing out this last point.[53] Kafka writes:

> Many complain that the words of the wise are always merely parables and of no use in daily life, which is the only life we have. When the sage says: "Go over," he does not mean that we should cross to some actual place, which we could do anyhow if the labor were worth it; he means some fabulous yonder, something unknown to us, something that he cannot designate more precisely either, and therefore cannot help us here in the very least. All these parables really set out to say merely that the incomprehensible is incomprehensible, and we know that already. But the cares we have to struggle with every day: that is a different matter.
>
> Concerning this a man once said: Why such reluctance? If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables and with that rid of your daily cares.
>
> Another said: I bet that was also a parable.
> The first said: You have won.
> The second said: But unfortunately only in parable.
> The first said: No, in reality: in parable you have lost (Kafka 457).

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[53] Lectures on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* given in the fall term of 2004 at the University of Alberta.

The willing of eternal return is what makes the parable real and the distinction between true and false (the question of whether or not eternal return is "true") is precisely beside the point. In other words, in willing eternal return one "wins in reality" and one "loses in parable," precisely because the parable is no longer parable, but reality itself.

Zarathustra has thought through, critically evaluated, and guessed what the vision and riddle of eternal return represents:

> By many a trail and manner I came to my truth; not on one latter did I climb to my height, where my eye roams out into my distance.
>
> And I never liked asking the way—that always offended my taste! I preferred to question and try the ways myself.
>
> All my coming and going was a trying and questioning—and truly, one must also *learn* to answer such questioning! That, however—is my taste:
>
> —not good, not bad, but *my* taste, of which I am no longer shameful nor secretive.
>
> "This—it turns out—is *my* way—where is yours?"—That is how I answered those who asked me "the way." *The* way after all—it does not exist! (*Z* III, "On the Spirit of Gravity," 2).

Simply, eternal return is "Zarathustra's" way and not *the* way. For Zarathustra, and for Nietzsche, it is precisely the questioning and answering itself that is important: the only *way* that can be meaningful for us is one that we effectively appropriate and experience *for ourselves*. The challenge that eternal return presents us with is that the way we create must be one that we are not only willing to take responsibility for, but also one that lives up to the highest measure of life that can be shown—what we are willing to have repeated for all eternity. In this sense, we must be like listeners of music and give form to and appropriate eternal return for ourselves. Because eternal return cannot be a "truth" that is there for us to be discovered but is only true insofar as it is effectively lived out, we are left together with Zarathustra's fellow sea-farers to think through, evaluate, and guess at what eternal return might mean *for us*. Thus

understood, Nietzsche should not be read as teaching eternal return as *the* truth, but rather as offering a sort of existential challenge to recognize the fundamental truth that we are the creators and evaluators of all truth and value and to take *responsibility* for this role. Failure to accept this challenge leaves us hanging over the dangerous abyss, falling quickly into the self-satisfying, self-conserving nihilism of the last man. Rather than engaging us with dialectical discursions into metaphysical accounts of reality that we no longer effectively believe, Nietzsche shares his quest with us by challenging us in ways that speak to our deepest *psychological* instincts thereby engaging us on a more subjective level. Eternal return is presented to us as an existential challenge to take up our true role as creators and arbiters of all meaning and value and to embrace each moment of life, both the beautiful and the terrible, *as if* each moment were our own creation. Thus, the vocation that Nietzsche sets for humankind is all at once ethical, aesthetic, existential, and religious: we are called to take responsibility and ownership of our own lives and redemption.[54] Rather than staring idly at the heavens or remaining on pitifully bent knees, Nietzsche challenges us through the parable of eternal return to champion and endorse each and every moment of life, to revel in our

[54] Notice that eternal return here works on a couple of levels. On the one hand we are called to take responsibility for our own lives, actions, and the implications thereof. In this sense, eternal return speaks to freedom, one of the three fundamental questions, I have suggested, central to Nietzsche's psychology of will to power. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (§§ 19-22, 36, for instance) Nietzsche deconstructs the question of freedom of the will and reveals it to be more fundamentally a question of strong versus weak wills. As he puts the point in *Twilight of the Idols*, freedom is: 'That one has the will to self-responsibility' (*TI* "Expeditions," 38). As I have been discussing, eternal return concerns the ultimate test of self-responsibility. But there is, importantly, another level to eternal return: Not only must we come to terms with the folly of our own youth and the temptation to revenge upon ourselves for this folly (*BGE* 31; *Z* II, "On Redemption"), eternal return also challenges us to accept responsibility for the youthful mistakes of humanity as a whole. What I mean here is that one must make oneself accountable for the entirety of the spectacle, which includes humanity's being duped by Platonic dogmatism and the theistic conception of God, for examples. Although one might not have been directly responsible for their inception in the first place, it is only through effectively turning all "it was" into "thus I willed it" that, on Nietzsche's view, one is able to create beyond this youthful folly. I will have more to say about the "collective" weight of responsibility below.

true nature and to fashion our lives into works of artistic expression and self-affirmation.

My discussion of eternal return has thus far mainly focused on the existential and ethical implications it presents us with. For the remainder of this chapter I want to consider the religious significance of eternal return. Although it is not directly named, eternal return is the central teaching of *Beyond Good and Evil* § 56.[55] This central teaching follows directly upon the heels of Nietzsche's treatment of the three most dangerous rungs on the ladder of religious cruelty, discussed in the previous chapter above. Thus, eternal return is the new ideal, so to speak, with which the new philosophers will make *religious* play in redeeming the final great sacrifice: the sacrifice of God for Nothingness. Eternal return, we shall see, is effectively Nietzsche's suggested response to "that paradoxical mystery of the final cruelty reserved for the new race that is now approaching." Those who, like Nietzsche, have

> ever really looked with an Asiatic and supra-Asiatic eye [i.e., like Zarathustra] into and down at the most world-negating of all possible ways of thinking—beyond good and evil…—anyone who has done these things (and perhaps precisely by doing these things) will have inadvertently opened his eyes to the inverse ideal: to the ideal of the most high-spirited, vital, world-affirming individual, who has learned not just to accept and go along with what was and is, but who wants it again *just as it was and is* through all eternity, insatiably shouting *da capo* not just to himself but to the whole play and performance, and not just to a performance, but rather, fundamentally, to the one who needs precisely this performance—and makes it necessary: because again and again he needs himself—and makes himself necessary.— —What? and wouldn't that be—*circulus vitiosus deus*? (*BGE* 56).

Notice here the *musical* allusion: one shouts *da capo* to the whole spectacle and performance. *Da capo*, as Norman notes in a footnote to *Beyond Good and Evil* § 56, 'directs the performer to return to an earlier point in the piece and repeat what has

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[55] Recall that *Beyond Good and Evil* is, overtly, the No-saying, No doing part of Nietzsche's task, whereas *Zarathustra* represents the Yes-saying, Yes-doing task. I take it that *Beyond Good and Evil* does not directly name eternal return because Nietzsche expects his students, having perhaps swallowed Zarathustra's bait, to be at least somewhat familiar with this teaching.

already been played.' Notice, too, the anticipated objection at the end of the passage: Does that not mean that God is a vicious circle? One way to think about this is that the interlocutor worries that each moment's repeating itself implies a vicious circle in the sense that each and every moment thus loses its significance precisely because it has thus already happened. In other words, because everything repeats itself eternally, we can effectively do no other than to experience the very same moment over and over until eternity. However, as Lampert points out, there is an 'unspoken but almost heard' (Lampert 2001, 121) response to this objection: Namely, "On the contrary. On the contrary, my friends!" (cf. *BGE* 36). Again, Nietzsche is not suggesting eternal return as a cosmological truth in the sense that each and every moment *actually* repeats again and again and in exactly the same way in every detail for all eternity. Rather, as we have seen, it is the psychological stance which one takes toward the world that is of importance. Put differently, each and every moment has significance precisely because it is we who give that significance to each moment *as if* it were to repeat, the same in every detail, for all eternity. So that each moment has this eternal significance is, in a manner of speaking, to accept the consequences of eternal return in faith. Eternal return is accepted on faith precisely because no proof can be given to show that it is in fact "true": it is *abgründig* (inscrutable). That eternal return is accepted on faith thus retains religious significance for the so-called doctrine. For the remainder of this chapter I will discuss how I see eternal return as Nietzsche's attempt at constructing a positive religious doctrine that remains faithful to this world and this life and at how eternal return is understood as Dionysian, which, as I suggested in the previous chapter, for Nietzsche represents the ultimate "vindication of god."

The first and most essential function of an authentic religion, recall, is dealing with the riddle of death. Eternal return purports to do just this through the unbounded affirmation and celebration of each and every moment of this life. As such, eternal return also touches on the second function of authentic religion (which I shall treat more fully below) by reconciling oneself with the permanence of the totality of things. This might at first sound strange, especially since the world viewed as will to power and nothing besides lacks permanence completely. In his discussion of *The Birth of Tragedy* in *Ecce Homo*, however, Nietzsche hints that perhaps something of the eternal recurrence had already been taught by Heraclitus (*EH* "Books," *BT* 3). Young suggests that Nietzsche's reverence 'for Hereclitus the man is due to the fact that he saw that there is nothing permanent, save the totality of things itself, and faced death—and was therefore able to love life—because he realized his own identity with *that* permanence' (Young 175).[56] As the passage quoted above (*BGE* 56) suggests, this is precisely what the most high-spirited, world-affirming individual accomplishes by willing eternal return. That is to say that, although there is nothing of permanence in the world itself as we experience it, willing eternal return just is, in a sense, to *give* (or *will*) permanence to the totality of things: it is to will that *everything* repeat eternally *exactly as it was and is*. Making this one's effective reality through the willing of eternal return, "the text disappears under the interpretation"; "one wins in reality and loses in parable." In other words, although willing eternal return is in effect "play," this play becomes the effective reality of the philosopher willing eternal return. Having the courage to stare deeply into the abyss and will eternal return thus slays

[56] Notice the striking similarities to Spinoza's treatment of immortality, namely the identifying one's own identity with the totality of God, or Nature.

even death: 'courage is the best slayer, courage that attacks; it slays even death, for it says: "Was *that* life? Well then! One More Time!"' (*Z* III "On the Vision and the Riddle," 1). The problem of death is thus inverted in the sense that one who wills eternal return gives the ultimate importance and significance to this world and this life, not only making the spectacle itself necessary, but also by realizing one's own identity with the totality of the spectacle. Simply, in willing eternal return we realize and affirm that what is significant is our identity with the world here and now. *Beyond Good and Evil* § 56, recall, here makes the point that one "makes oneself necessary" in the sense that one wills the whole spectacle necessary for the sake of oneself. However, by willing eternal return we transcend our own finitude by identifying and reconciling our finite existence with the infinite. So my willing myself necessary in the sense that the whole spectacle exists for the sake of me is not meant to suggest that I am then, so to speak, the center of the universe. What is at issue here for Nietzsche is the idea of self-transformation in the sense that we effectively transcend the problem of death precisely because we thus always already enjoy our eternal identity with the infinite. In other words, eternal return is a response to death not because it tells us a salutary "truth," but because in willing eternal return we are transformed: "true" eternity is thus realized in us here and now concretely.[57]

As I have intimated, eternal return thus also fulfils the second function of authentic religion: redemption for life's nausea and despair and the reconciliation of our suffering with the grand narrative of existence. In his speech "On Redemption," Zarathustra says: 'To redeem those who are the past and to recreate all "it was" into

[57] In this sense, Nietzsche hints at a second of the three fundamental questions of his new psychology: immortality. But this immortality is not to be understood in terms of eternal life after death. Rather, the soul attains immortality in the sense that it has eternal significance for and in this life and this world.

"thus I willed it!"—only that would I call redemption' (*Z* II "On Redemption"). But to recreate all "it was" into "thus I willed it!" just is to will eternal return. On Nietzsche's view, suffering itself is inherent in willing: 'based on [the will's] inability to will backward' (*Z* II "On Redemption"). Another way to think about this is that suffering arises from our inability or, more to the point, our unwillingness to take responsibility for our own actions, including our role as creators and arbiters of all truth and value. As *Beyond Good and Evil* § 56 suggests, however, it is precisely the willing of eternal return that reconciles us with the grand narrative and so reconciles our suffering: One shouts *da capo* to the entire spectacle, to the whole performance, making not only the grand narrative itself necessary, but also making oneself necessary to that performance.

In Chapter Two I discussed at length the saint's turn to the *other-worldly* to *escape* suffering altogether. For Nietzsche, however, suffering is itself celebrated with something like Homeric gratitude [χάρις]. As the highest formula of affirmation that is at all attainable, eternal return says *Yes*! to life with all its suffering and terror. This Yes-saying is on par with Homeric χάρις in the sense that it is the greatest blessing and celebration of life. Zarathustra *dances*[58] before the world and existence with χάρις, even though he has had

> the hardest, most terrible insight into reality … [he] has thought the "most abysmal idea," [and] nevertheless does not consider it an objection to existence, not even to its eternal recurrence—but rather one reason more for being himself the eternal Yes to all things, "the tremendous, unbounded saying Yes and Amen."—"Into all abysses I still carry the blessings of my saying Yes."—***But this is the concept of Dionysus once again*** (*EH* "Books," *Z* 7).

[58] 'Zarathustra is a dancer' (*EH* "Books," *Z* 7).

And here we have Nietzsche's ultimate opposition: 'Dionysus versus the Crucified' (*EH* "Destiny," 9; *WP* 1052).

In *The Will to Power* § 1052, Nietzsche expands on the antipodal religious attitudes of Dionysus and the Crucified. Specifically, the antithesis between Dionysus and the Crucified is '*not* a difference in regard to their martyrdom—it is a difference in the meaning of it.' More to the point, the difference in meaning is precisely the difference in the *attitude* each takes towards suffering:

> whether a Christian meaning or a tragic meaning. In the former case, it is supposed to be the path to a holy existence; in the latter case, being is counted as *holy enough* to justify even a monstrous amount of suffering: he is sufficiently strong, rich, and capable of deifying to do so. The Christian denies even the happiest lot on earth: he is sufficiently weak, poor, disinherited to suffer from life in whatever form he meets it. The god on the cross is a curse on life, a signpost to seek redemption from life; Dionysus cut to pieces is a *promise* of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction (*WP* 1052).

So eternal return, also to be understood as the concept of the *Dionysian*, is the ultimate affirmation of life and thus, like the Homeric affirmation Nietzsche so highly reveres, involves standing before all of life and nature with an enormous abundance of gratitude [χάρις] (*BGE* 49) and also thus satisfies the second function of authentic religion.

Although much more will need to be said on this issue than current space allows, a rudimentary analysis of the weight of responsibility it demands should be sufficient to make the point that eternal return also fulfills the third essential function of authentic religion. This is because the infinite weight of responsibility eternal return engenders is not limited to the existential plight of the individual, but concerns the overall enhancement 'of the species "humanity"' (*BGE* 44). Moreover, on Nietzsche's

prescription, it is religion in particular that the future philosophers will employ for this task of the ennoblement of humanity:

> The philosopher as *we* understand him, we free spirits—, as the man with the most comprehensive responsibility, whose conscience bears the weight of the overall development of humanity, *this philosopher will make use of religion for his breeding and educational work*, just as he will make use of the prevailing political and economic situation (*BGE* 61, my emphasis).

For Nietzsche, the willing of eternal return thus entails more than merely taking responsibility for oneself and one's own actions. Specifically, eternal return demands the *most comprehensive responsibility*: "the weight of the overall development of humanity." As Lampert notes, 'the ultimate affirmation is self-affirmation *and* affirmation of the whole' (Lampert 2001, 118). It is to realize that what one wills has consequences for both one's self and the other: In willing eternal return the lines between one's own subjectivity and the objectivity of the other is effectively transcended. That is, in bearing the abysmal weight of eternal return everything objective is effectively rendered subjective. This is, in a manner of speaking, the result of one's very act of willing. Recall, however, that eternal return is a parable. Thus, Nietzsche is not making the silly solipsistic claim that the external world is a product of one's own willing or one's own imagination. What Nietzsche is saying that that in willing eternal return one realizes that the consequences of one's willing extend infinitely beyond oneself. Although the fallout of one's willing might not be readily observable, what one does here and now will have a lasting effect on the events of the world henceforth. These effects may be insignificant enough to go entirely unnoticed or they may be significant enough to alter the course of history. Key for Nietzsche is that the new philosophers, the ones strong enough, hard enough, and artist enough to will eternal return, fully recognize the weight of responsibility eternal return demands.

The future philosophers are responsible for the overall development of humanity, and it is through the cultivation of a healthy religious *ethos* that they fulfill this responsibility. It is crucial to note, however, that it is not the doctrine of eternal return itself that binds the community in the sense that the great majority believes eternal return as a religious truth/tenet, since, as I discussed above, the abysmal weight of responsibility demanded by willing eternal return would kill them. Rather, what binds the community is the new religious *ethos* created by the future philosophers who have taken the task of the "overall enhancement of the species humanity" upon themselves, who will throw the fetters over the necks of a thousand peoples and give humanity a goal (*Z* I "On a Thousand and One Goals").

The issue remains, however, concerning what the relation is between the species humanity, which is now the *letzen Mensch*, and the *Über-mensch*, the future philosophers who have willed eternal return thereby realising eternal return and the *Übermensch* in themselves and whose task is thus the "overall enhancement of the species humanity." While I do not have any worked out theory about how the *Alle* incapable of willing eternal return will be enhanced by those who do (in part because I do not think Nietzsche provides such an account), the enhancement will presumably be fulfilled through '*new festivals*' (*Z* IV "The Ass Festival," 3) created by the future philosophers and to be celebrated by the species humanity themselves. In the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche offers an account of the Hellenic Dionysian mysteries, which, I think, helps to provide us with a clue about what these new festivals will require to bridge the chasm between the *Übermensch* and the *letzen Mensch* and enhance the

species humanity. In § 4 of "What I Owe to the Ancients," which I shall here quote at length, Nietzsche notes that:

> it is only in the Dionysian mysteries, in the psychology of the Dionysian condition, that the *fundamental fact* of all the Hellenic instinct expresses itself—its "will to life." *What* did the Hellene guarantee to himself with these mysteries? *Eternal* life, the eternal recurrence of life; the future promised and consecrated in the past; the triumphant Yes to life beyond death and change; *true* life as collective continuation of life through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality.... I know of no more exalted symbolism than this *Greek* symbolism, the symbolism of the Dionysian. The profoundest instinct of life, the instinct for the future of life, for the eternity of life, is in this word experienced religiously—the actual road to life, procreation, as the *sacred road*. ... It was only Christianity, with *ressentiment against* life in its foundations, which made sexuality into something impure: it threw *filth* on the beginning, on the prerequisite of our life... (*TI* "Ancients," 4).

As Nietzsche here points out, there is a sense in which the *Alle* participated in eternal return. Specifically, through celebrating the *symbolism* of the Dionysian mysteries the Hellenic instinct itself, its "will to life," was able to express itself in ways that affirm eternal return without each individual themselves willing eternal return. What I want to suggest here is that the future philosophers themselves are the ones strong enough, hard enough, and artistic enough to will eternal return, whereas the *Alle*, who are incapable of willing eternal return themselves, can nevertheless take part in eternal return in and through the celebration of the *symbolism* of eternal return in the new festivals created by the new philosophers. Whatever else they may be, the new festivals Nietzsche is calling for, not unlike the stories of *other-worldly* redemption told by the *homines religiosi*, can in effect only be salutary truths given to the masses. Nevertheless, as I understand it, the enhancement of the species humanity is in part achieved precisely because these lies are employed in the service of life in that they no longer call for everyone to be reborn beyond humanity like Christianity's "*ressentiment against* life," for instance. Rather, as Zarathustra puts the point: 'we do

not want to enter the kingdom of heaven at all: we have become men—*and so we want the kingdom of the earth*' (*Z* IV, "The Ass Festival," 2).

While I do not think that Nietzsche provides insight into the specific liturgies and communion involved with the new religious *ethos*, the chief role for this new, healthy religion will be primarily to give meaning and value to our lives. Concerning the 'great majority,' those for whom specifically the new philosophers must create a new religion, Nietzsche remarks that:

> Religion gives them an invaluable sense of contentment with their situation and type; it puts their hearts greatly at ease, it glorifies their obedience, it gives them (and those like them) one more happiness and one more sorrow, it transfigures and improves them, it provides something of a justification for everything commonplace, for all the lowliness, for the whole half-bestial poverty of their souls. Religion, and the meaning religion gives to life, spreads sunshine over such eternally tormented people and makes them bearable even to themselves. It has the same effect that an Epicurean philosophy usually has on the suffering of higher ranks: it refreshes, refines, and *makes the most* of suffering, as it were (*BGE* 61).

There is a sense in which religion is thus also used to preserve an order of rank. People are made to feel content with their lot and to be made obedient. But this obedience is not like the obedience demanded by the sovereign religions so far that 'have played a principal role in keeping the type "man" on a lower level [preserving] too much of *what should be destroyed*' (*BGE* 62). These sovereign religions have operated under 'the holy pretext of "improving" mankind,' but more truthfully have been a 'ruse of sucking the blood of life itself' (*EH* "Destiny," 8). While the order of rank is in fact to be preserved in the new religion, it is to be preserved with the opposite intent than the sovereign religions so far: namely, not to preserve the "type" man on a lower rung, but for the ennobling of humankind, in part by translating

> humanity back into nature; to gain control of the many vain and fanciful interpretations and incidental meanings that have been scribbled and drawn over that eternal basic text of *homo natura* so far; to make sure that, from now on, the human being will stand before the human being, just as he already stands before the rest of

> nature today, hardened by the discipline of science,—with courageous Oedipus eyes and sealed up Odysseus ears, deaf to the lures of the old metaphysical bird catchers who have been whistling to him for far too long (*BGE* 230).

The new philosophers must thus create a religion that no longer prostrates itself before promises of *other-worldly* illusions, but rather remains faithful to this world and this life and can be meaningfully lived out by human beings in the world here and now. As we have seen, however, this new religion must nevertheless in some way account for and incorporate the religions that have been sovereign so far, rather than simply ignoring them or casting them into oblivion by covering up all the nasty bits that we would just as soon forget.

As I suggested above, I do not think that Nietzsche himself is offering a new religion. Rather, Nietzsche is more properly a religious herald *paving the way* for a new religion. Nevertheless, in the *Anti-Christ* Nietzsche does offer some insight as to what a healthy *communal* religion might look like:

> A people which still believes in itself still also has its own God. In him it venerates the conditions through which it has prospered, its virtues—it projects its joy in itself, its feeling of power on to a being whom one can thank for them. He who is rich wants to bestow; a proud people needs a God in order to *sacrifice*.... Within the bounds of such presuppositions religion is a form of gratitude (*A* 16).

Notice the talk of "a people" here. Nietzsche's discussion here concerns "a people" proper, but we might also apply "a people" to the new philosophers themselves as "a people." It is the new philosophers who celebrate the conditions through which they have prospered in the form of Dionysus, and through the willing of eternal return they express the ultimate form of gratitude for all existence, sacrificing even themselves for the creation and cultivation of a healthy communal *ethos*. That Nietzsche himself answers the religious instinct in this way and that he suggests religion be used for the overall development of humanity is what suggests to me he is making the claim that

human beings are fundamentally religious beings. For good or ill humanity answers the questions concerning the meaning and value of life religiously. Armed with a proper understanding of the psychology of will to power the new philosophers will exploit this religious instinct for the betterment of humanity, rather than for the continual enslavement of humanity to *other-worldly* illusions.

The fourth function that must be fulfilled by an authentic religion is the creation of authority through mystery. This aspect of religion has to do with the sense that we are part of something greater, numinous, and rich in hidden significance. For Nietzsche, I think, this "something greater" is life itself, which also serves as its own authority. There are two instances I want to draw attention to where Nietzsche offers insight into how we might understand eternal return as authoritative. In discussing the problem of the value of life in *Twilight of the Idols*, for instance, Nietzsche writes:

> One would have to be situated *outside* life, and on the other hand to know it as thoroughly as any, as many, as all who have experienced it, to be permitted to touch on the problem of the *value* of life at all: sufficient reason for understanding that this problem is for us an inaccessible problem. When we speak of values we do so under the inspiration and from the perspective of life: life itself evaluates through us when we establish values (*TI* "Morality as Anti-Nature," 5).

As we have seen, there is no "outside" perspective from which we can evaluate life. Thus, there is a sense in which the question of whether or not there is any value to life is, for Nietzsche, misplaced—at the very least, given our situatedness within the world, there is no "true" answer (understood in the traditional opposition of "true" versus "false") to which we have access. Nevertheless, life evaluates itself *through* us. Furthermore, armed with a proper understanding of the psychology of will to power we can appreciate that the world (and so, life) *eternally* re-creates and re-evaluates itself through us. Life itself, then, is what gives authority to eternal return, since life

itself is what creates and wills eternal return. The second insight into how we might understand eternal return as authoritative is also what I take to be Nietzsche's ultimate vindication of God: the (re)appearance of Dionysus in the final passages of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

In *Beyond Good and Evil* § 295 Nietzsche pays homage to the new philosopher god and ultimate expression of will to power: Dionysus. Throughout *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche has been giving his readers 'a small taste' of the philosophy of the god Dionysus. As I have been suggesting throughout this chapter, however, Nietzsche's teachings have been offered 'in undertones, which would be best, since it concerns many things that are secret, new, foreign, strange, uncanny' (*BGE* 295). That is, because what is being said is not for the ears of just anyone, but specifically only for the noble Yes-saying type destined for commanding and legislating, Nietzsche's teaching is wrought with "monstrous and terrible masks" to throw off those who are not strong enough, hard enough, artist enough for these new truths. But even 'the fact that Dionysus is a philosopher and that, consequently, even gods philosophize,' Nietzsche says, 'seems to me like something new and not without its dangers, something that might arouse distrust precisely among philosophers,—among you, my friends, it has less opposition, unless it comes too late and at the wrong time: I have been told that you do not like believing in God and gods these days' (*BGE* 295).[59] That even the gods philosophize raises suspicion among the philosophers precisely because philosophy has traditionally understood the concept of a god as an eternal, unchanging, transcendent God and so a god that does philosophy, a god that is thus

[59] Recall from above that I suggested that Nietzsche has not set out to convince people that God is dead, but rather learned through conversations with his contemporaries that God was already effectively dead in their hearts and minds.

itself in a constant state of flux, cannot but sound strange and foreign to such ears. But for Nietzsche's friends, the noble Yes-saying type being educated in the psychology of will to power, this suggestion will have less opposition. *Beyond Good and Evil*, then, is something like an induction into the mysteries of Dionysus for these new philosophers.

As 'the last disciple and initiate of the god Dionysus' (*BGE* 295), Nietzsche has been cultivating disciples of his own and in so doing has been inducting them into the mysteries of Dionysus.[60] The appeal to Dionysus is, I think, thus also the appeal to authority, both in the sense that Dionysus provides authority to the *Übermensch* whose responsibility it will be to create a new religious *ethos* and the *Alle* or *letzen Mensch* who will in turn celebrate Dionysus in the new religious festivals. The implication, then, is that we still need gods, and in this way religion, as Nietzsche understands it, can still give meaning to the lives of the new philosophers and, in turn, also to the species humanity. Important to point out, however, is that this "need" for gods is not to be understood as the metaphysical need for a transcendent deity. Rather, it is the need for a belief in something greater than ourselves which gives meaning to and structures our practical lives. In Nietzsche's view, this "something greater" is a reflection of what humanity can make of itself, which for Nietzsche is represented in the form of the *Übermensch* who wills eternal return. This is, as Young points out, to enter 'into a (self-)transcendent *perspective* on the world rather than entry into a transcendent world' (Young 143). Our "religious" need, then, need not itself require a metaphysical response, though such responses have served this purpose well in the

[60] Notice that Nietzsche thus also answers the third fundamental question of his new psychology by an appeal to god (NB: "god" and not "God".)

past. Rather, our religious need can be satisfied by our own, *this-worldly* creative act of willing.

The religious instinct is indeed growing vigorously within us (*BGE* 53) and, Nietzsche claims, its fulfilment is to be found among the gods. As I have been arguing, however, the new gods are to be understood differently. The two central tenets of the Dionysian mysteries are eternal return and will to power. Zarathustra, and so Dionysus, 'conceives reality *as it is*, being strong enough to do so; this type is not estranged or removed from reality but is reality itself and exemplifies all that is terrible and questionable in it' (*EH* "Destiny," 5). As an expression of eternal return, then, the Dionysian is the highest form of gratitude that is at all possible. Concerning will to power, Nietzsche tells us in the *Anti-Christ*, for instance, that 'There is in fact no other alternative for Gods: *either* they are the will to power ... *or* else the impotence of power—and then they necessarily become *good*' (*A* 16). As we have seen above, even the theistic God of Christianity, for example, is an expression of will to power. Armed with a proper psychology of will to power, however, we see that the Christian God is actually a form of impotence, a complete lack of power in the sense that it negates itself insofar as it is self-negating. This is because the Christian conception of 'God degenerated to the *contradiction of life*, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal *Yes*! In God a declaration of hostility towards life, nature, the will to life! God the formula for every calumny of "this world", for every lie about "the next world"! In God nothingness deified, the will to nothingness sanctified!...' (*A* 18). All gods are an expression of will to power. At first, the Christian God, on Nietzsche's view, was no exception to this rule. Once will to power is properly

understood, however, we see that this God actually degenerates into a complete negation of power in the sense that this God represents a complete negation of life. As a god, Dionysus is an expression of will to power; but, unlike the Christian God, Dionysus represents the ultimate affirmation of life and so, in a sense, is the ultimate "vindication of God." As an expression of eternal return Dionysus represents the ultimate affirmation of life and so Dionysus also represents will to power in its most authentic form: the transfiguration of life and an eternal *Yes*! to life. It is Dionysus himself who, through the induction into his mysteries, provides authority to his religion. In other words, understood religiously, as Dionysian, life itself is its own authority.

Nietzsche's religious teaching is, I think, making a sort of ontological claim about what it means to be human. I am here careful to use "sort of" for reasons that should be clear from above. Namely, Nietzsche has rejected the traditional two-world dogmatic metaphysics and so the question of ontology here too must take on a different sense. What I mean by "sort of ontological claim" is that I think Nietzsche's claim is that humankind *needs* religion in the sense that it is religion provides the meaning and values that "bind us back" to our very way of being in the world. As we saw in Chapter Two, for instance, the Homeric Greeks were able to survive the terrors and horrors of existence by turning them into playful representations which made it possible to live: to exist under the same sun as the Homeric gods was a noble and worthy existence. So, too, is Nietzsche's religion, insofar as it may be called a "religion," one of *play* in the sense that it turns the absurd and nauseating in existence into representations with which it is possible to live, but is careful not to then mistake

these representations for the "true" or "good." That Nietzsche's philosophy of religion is play by no means detracts from its truthfulness or its seriousness. Recall, for instance, that the new philosophers will still love their truths, but they will not love their truths like dogmatists (*BGE* 43). These new philosophers make religious play with Dionysus, for example, and while fully recognizing that it is play it is nonetheless a religious response to the religious instinct that is growing vigorously within us. The religious instinct has become suspicious of the traditional theistic responses and what we need now is a religion that can be meaningfully embraced in the world here and now. Such religion must be consistent with the new psychology of will to power, which just is what Nietzsche's presentation of eternal return and Dionysus purports to do. And although these new truths are effectively lies, Nietzsche thinks that what is important is the end to which these lies are told (cf. *A* 56). As I have been discussing, the end to which *new* (noble) religious lies must now be told is for Nietzsche a higher, healthier humanity.

Nietzsche ends Part III of *Beyond Good and Evil*, the part on religious being, with the following warning. Acknowledging the downside to all religions, he says that 'there is a high and horrible price to pay when religions do *not* serve as means for breeding and education in the hands of a philosopher, but instead serve themselves and become *sovereign*, when they want to be the ultimate goal instead of a means alongside other means' (*BGE* 62). As we have seen, there is no "true" religious being or religious "essence" that is "there" for us to discover by means of rational deliberation or religious revelation. Rather, what constitutes authentic religious being is what we effectively will, what we create, and that creation as we live it out. Armed

with a proper psychology of will to power the new philosophers thus bear the task of eternally creating and *re*-creating communal religious beliefs. Philosophy must rule religious faith, and the philosopher must be strong enough to destroy and recreate her truths when they become victorious. This is because life is will to power and nothing besides and as an expression of will to power life continually re-creates itself. Simply, the philosopher must evolve with will to power and continually re-evaluate the world and her place in it. Failure to do so runs the risk of returning to the abyss of nihilism in the sense that the philosophers' truths will inevitably cease to be meaningful to a world that has itself moved on.

Epilogue

Zarathustra the Dancer

> Indeed, I counsel you to go away from me and guard yourselves against Zarathustra! And even better: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he deceived you.... Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you (*Z* I, "On the Bestowing Virtue," 3).
>
> To my friend Georg! Once you discovered me, it was no great feat to find me: the difficulty now is to lose me...
>
> The Crucified
>
> (Nietzsche to Georg Brandes, Turin, January 4, 1889, *Letters* 345).

In this thesis I have been arguing that Nietzsche is not at all *anti*-religious, but is rather, first and foremost, a religious thinker and religious reformer. After all, as he himself says in many contexts, what Nietzsche is offering is a *transvaluation* of values, *not* a wholesale *rejection* of values.[61] The religious reform that Nietzsche has principally in mind, I have argued, is a transition from the Platonic/Christian values that devalue life to an unbounded Homeric/Dionysian celebration of and gratitude for life. As noted above, however, "religious being," for Nietzsche, is not, strictly speaking, a form of "religion" at all—at least not as traditionally conceived, namely as a set of pre-determined dogmas that constitute a "true" and final religion as a fixed set of beliefs. Instead, Nietzsche calls attention to the religious malaise of modernity and offers hope of a new, more, or at least differently meaningful mode of religious being.

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[61] In his Forward to the *Twilight of the Idols*, for instance, Nietzsche refers to the 'first book of the Revaluation of all Values' (*TI* "Forward"), namely the *Anti-Christ*.

Recall that Zarathustra is a dancer. In the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche remarks that '*dancing* in any form cannot be divorced from a *noble education*, being able to dance with the feet, with concepts, with words: do I still have to say that one has to be able to dance with the *pen*—that *writing* has to be learned?' (*TI* "What Germans Lack," 7, my emphasis). Nietzsche's texts, I have been arguing, are intended for the few, the noble Yes-saying philosophers of the future. Nietzsche's dancing with religious concepts in his texts, however much they might be intended to form a part of this noble education, can only be meaningful for us insofar as we appropriate them as our own and live them out (dance with them) ourselves. For Nietzsche, this dance with religious concepts is indeed intended to choreograph a life, not excluding the terrible and horrible, with which it is possible to live. Nevertheless, Nietzsche himself ends *Beyond Good and Evil* by asking: 'Oh, what are you anyway, my written and painted thoughts! It was not long ago that you were still so colourful, young and malicious, so full of thorns and secret spices that you made me sneeze and laugh—and now? You have already lost your novelty, and I am afraid that some of you are decent and upright, so boring! And was it ever any different?' (*BGE* 296). While this thesis represents my own thinking about Nietzsche's dance with his painted thoughts, a thinking that is admittedly *only* an interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy of religion, an interpretation that has come to believe in itself, I think it only fitting that I conclude with Nietzsche's remarks about his own similar conversations:

> In the middle of a lively conversation I will often see the other person's face expressing his thoughts (or the thoughts I attribute to him) with a degree of clarity and detail that far exceeds the power of my visual ability:—such subtlety of muscle movement and ocular expression *must* have come from my own imagination. In all likelihood the person had an entirely different expression, or none at all (*BGE* 192).

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